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PROTECTION, MANAGEMENT AND SECURITY INDUSTRY POLICY-MAKERS AND PRACTITIONERS

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Border Security Report is a bi-monthly electronic magazine and is the border management industry magazine delivering agency and industry news and developments, as well as more in-depth features and analysis to over 30,000 border agencies, agencies at the borders and industry professionals, policymakers and practitioners, worldwide.



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Why an Israeli-Palestinian conflict is different?



The barbaric attack by Hamas on Israeli citizens was always going to result in a perfectly justified response from the IDF.

In reflecting on previous conflicts, in the context of this magazine, we would now be discussing the inevitable mass movement of refugees and the impact they will have on migrant flows across international borders.

But an Israeli-Palestinian conflict is different.

It's different because the Palestinian people, literally have nowhere to go. They can't escape to Israel for obvious reasons, or Egypt. So, they are stuck in a war zone!

The Hamas high command would have foreseen all of this when they conceived the attack and then hid amongst their own population. They would have known that there would be a very aggressive response by the IDF that would inevitably result in mass civilian casualties and a humanitarian disaster.

So, you must conclude that this was one of the desired effects of their plan. Maybe it was a desperate bid to put the Palestinian cause back on the international agenda, or some forlorn hope that it would trigger a Middle East wide jihad. Or they were just told to by their Iranian backers to kill the Israel-KSA negotiations.

Whatever the reason, I do not subscribe to the view that the Palestinian people have somehow brought this upon themselves. Yes, 44.45% of Palestinians did vote for 'Change and Reform' (Hamas) back in 2006, but even then, according to a poll of voters, 75% said that Hamas should change its policies regarding Israel. And at the time, mass attacks on Israel were definitely not on the Hamas election manifesto.

Since that time, Palestinians have been stuck with 30,000 violent gun toting Islamic fundamentalists. And however successful the IDF are at killing Hamas fighters and degrading their ability to attack Israel in future, Hamas will survive in some form, and will rebuild from the ranks of the orphans and displaced children of Palestinians hiding from this round of conflict.

Whatever the outcome of the current negotiations, unless they result in a real move towards a political settlement that includes a viable Palestinian state, this will just be another chapter in the never-ending Israel-Palestinian horror story.

Tony Kingham
Editor

UNODC strengthens multi-stakeholder responses to counter Trafficking in Persons and Smuggling of Migrants with capacity building and knowledge sharing



The 2022 UNODC Global Report on Trafficking in Persons found that people of all genders and age groups especially women are at risk of cross-border trafficking. To address border management responding to trafficking in persons (TIP) and smuggling of migrants (SOM), dedicated research and analysis are required to ensure interventions are aligned with the national laws and Government priorities.

The First National Study on Trafficking in Persons in Bangladesh recommended implementing crime prevention measures to identify risk factors of TIP and SOM which includes cross-border response. For this, it is also imperative to strengthen multi-stakeholder responses centred on awareness, knowledge sharing and capacity building.

In this context, UNODC under the framework of the Global Action against Trafficking in Persons and the Smuggling of Migrants-Bangladesh (GLO.ACT-Bangladesh) organized a workshop on the scope of assessment on border management to address TIP and SOM—with the participation of 39 officials from key ministries, police, border agencies and UN agencies.

The workshop was opened by Ms. Ishita Rony, Deputy Secretary of the Public Security Division of Ministry of Home Affairs and Deputy Project Director

of GLO.ACT-Bangladesh. Providing an overview of the initiatives of the Government of Bangladesh, she said, “A strong border management strategy serves as the first line of defense in preventing these crimes by identifying and intercepting potential victims and perpetrators.”

In extensive group discussions, participants exchanged information and experiences in border management to address TIP and SOM, examining existing institutional and legal frameworks and capacity-building needs.

The responses gathered from the workshop will serve as the basis for an assessment report on border management to address TIP and SOM in Bangladesh.

To build youth capacities with awareness and sensitization, UNODC collaborated with 22nd Human Rights Summer School (HRSS) organized by Empowerment through Law of Common People (ELCOP) in Manikganj. Over 60 law students and facilitators from Bangladesh, Nepal, India, Australia, South Africa and Iran were trained and sensitized on human rights and human security, with focus on TIP and SOM.

Mr. Mahdy Hassan, National Programme Coordinator of GLO.ACT-Bangladesh introduced the concept of transnational organized crime, emphasizing on the structure and significance of the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime. The participants engaged actively with an open discussion and exercise, to understand the interlinkages of TIP and SOM with human security.

In the feedback questionnaire, one of the participants wrote, “Before this, I had a limited idea on TIP and SOM. Now that I know about the vulnerabilities of trafficking victims and smuggled migrants, I will be more sympathetic towards them.”

FRONTEX RISK ANALYSIS 2023/2024 DISCUSSES CHALLENGES AT EU EXTERNAL BORDERS – PART 2

On September 4th Frontex published its annual Risk Analysis Report for 2023/2024, providing an overview of the challenges at the European Union's external borders. This is the second extract from the report as it relates to migration and human trafficking

Secondary movements

In 2022, EU MS/SAC reported the highest level of secondary movements since 2016¹. Authorities registered 317 500 detections of third-country nationals travelling within the EU/Schengen Area without permission to stay, 92% more than in 2021.² This increase was mostly due to more irregular migrants detected en route from the Western Balkans region

towards more Western and Northern EU MS/SAC. The situation at the EU

external borders with the Western Balkan countries is mainly fueled by the transit migration via the Eastern Mediterranean and the arrivals in Western Balkan countries based on their visa policies.

Many migrants detected on these routes were of nationalities that are required to hold a visa to enter the Schengen area but enjoyed visa-free travel to one or more third countries. For example, illegally staying Indian and Tunisian nationals ranked third and fourth, respectively, as regards

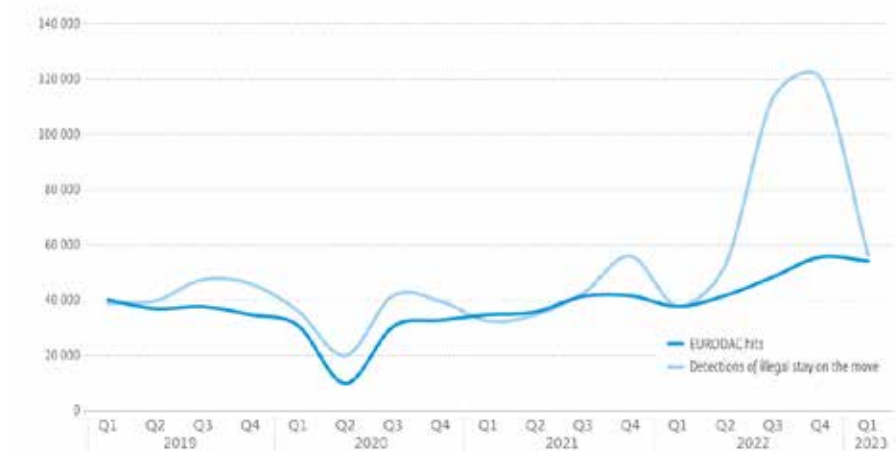
intra-EU/Schengen movements in 2022 and were particularly prevalent on the Western Balkan route.

Following intensive consultations of the EU with Western Balkan states in 2022, a visible decrease was observed in the secondary movements of third-country nationals who had previously arrived at certain third-country airports and then illegally crossed the EU's external borders.

Their number is expected to further decline in 2023. Moreover, since 2021, three third countries in the Western Balkans currently host a fully-fledged Frontex operation, thereby supporting their authorities in the prevention of future irregular migration to the EU.

The intra-Schengen routes emanating from the Western Balkans were also used by third-country nationals who had entered the EU on the Eastern Mediterranean route. As the number of arrivals in the Eastern Mediterranean remains large, it can be expected that irregular secondary movements towards EU MS/ SAC in the west and north of the EU will remain on a high level in 2023. The flow mostly consists of Afghan and Syrian nationals but also nationals from North Africa, Asia and Latin America.

The increase in irregular migration on the Central Mediterranean route in 2022 bears a significant risk of increased secondary flows in 2023. Current northward secondary movements show a clear



upward trend. This trend is likely to consolidate in 2023, especially considering increasing illegal border-crossings in summertime. Almost half of the third-country nationals irregularly travelling in the Central Mediterranean are migrants from Middle Eastern or Asian countries, such as Syria and Pakistan.

When apprehended in a transit country within the EU/Schengen Area, migrants often try to continue their trip by applying for asylum and then absconding.

This phenomenon finds reflection in the high rate of implicitly withdrawn applications and the large number of take back requests made under the Dublin Regulation. EUAA analysis³ indicates that many more asylum applications were implicitly withdrawn in the EU/SAC in 2022 than in any of the past five years.

The ratio of withdrawn applications to applications lodged thus rose from about 1 in 10 in the previous 4 years to 1 in 7 in 2022.

The reasons for secondary

movements are multifaceted and difficult to generalise.

Although asylum recognition rates for some nationalities differ strongly across EU MS/SAC, it is not clear to what extent this might encourage secondary movements. For example, Syrians have rather high recognition rates all over Europe – including in typical transit countries – and have still been moving onwards.

Furthermore, secondary movements also take place after protection status has been granted in another EU MS/SAC. In such cases, the actual content of protection status and related integration and livelihood opportunities, which differ between EU MS/SAC, may be a determining factor.

Another important aspect might be differences in reception conditions and accommodation facilities across EU MS/ SAC, which are also found to play a role for beneficiaries. The mere availability of reception space in general or for particular groups (e.g. vulnerable persons) can be crucial.

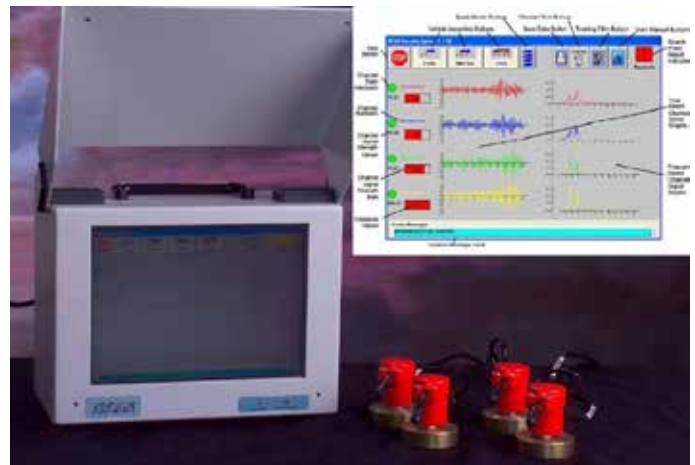
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For example, insufficient reception space has led to temporary accommodation in containers and tents in some countries.⁵ Furthermore, the Russian invasion of Ukraine has put additional pressure on reception capacities across the EU.

Moreover, having family members already staying in specific EU countries might also be a significant driver of secondary movements.

Insufficient registration after detection at the EU's external borders complicates subsequent identification of arrivals in other EU MS/SAC and hinders their transfer back to those countries that should be in charge of examining the application for international protection under the Dublin procedure.

This significantly facilitates secondary movements. In 2022, according to eu-LISA data, the number of Eurodac registrations (category 2) was 42% lower than the number of the illegal crossings detected at the EU's external border.

The migration pressure currently affecting the EU's external borders remains high, especially in terms of arrivals on the Central Mediterranean route. Therefore, it is very likely that the level of secondary movements will remain high or even increase in 2023. Again, this underlines

the importance of mitigating vulnerabilities in the registration and accommodation of migrants crossing the EU's external borders illegally.

Moreover, addressing gaps in the return systems of individual EU MS/SAC and swifter implementation of Dublin transfers may also discourage irregular migrants from undertaking secondary movements across Europe.

Risks to returns

With around 86 000 effective returns of third-country nationals, the 2022 figure was almost unchanged compared to 2021 (+1.6%). Hence the last three years were the years with the lowest figures of effective returns since the data collection began in 2011.

There are multiple reasons for the low number of effective returns in 2022, the most important one being the war in Ukraine. In the years 2018–2022, Ukrainians were the third-country nationality accounting for the highest number of returns. The Temporary Protection Directive adopted after Russia's invasion allows Ukrainian refugees to stay in the EU MS/SAC. Moreover, a lack of cooperation also substantially reduced the returns to Russia in 2022.

As the pandemic-related travel restrictions were being relaxed in 2022, it would be reasonable to expect an overall increase in effective returns. Instead, their number barely rose. On the other hand, Member States reported a more marked increase in return decisions issued in 2022 (515 000, 9% more than in 2021). At the same time, the number of illegal

border-crossings surged much more significantly, i.e. by 66% between these two years.

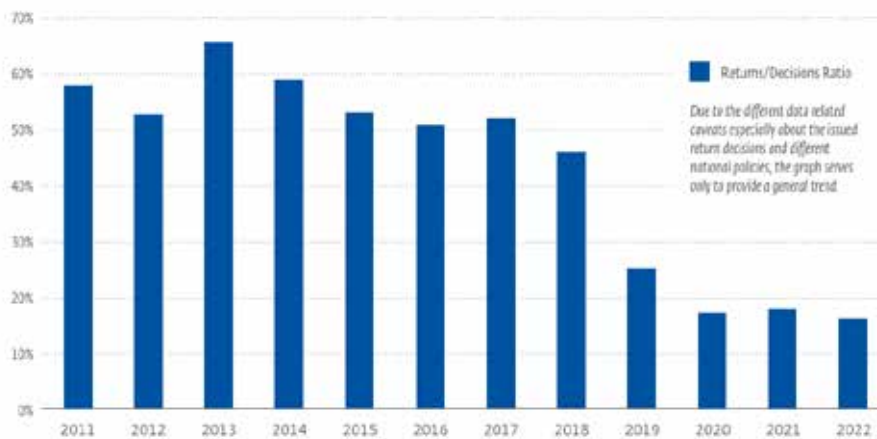
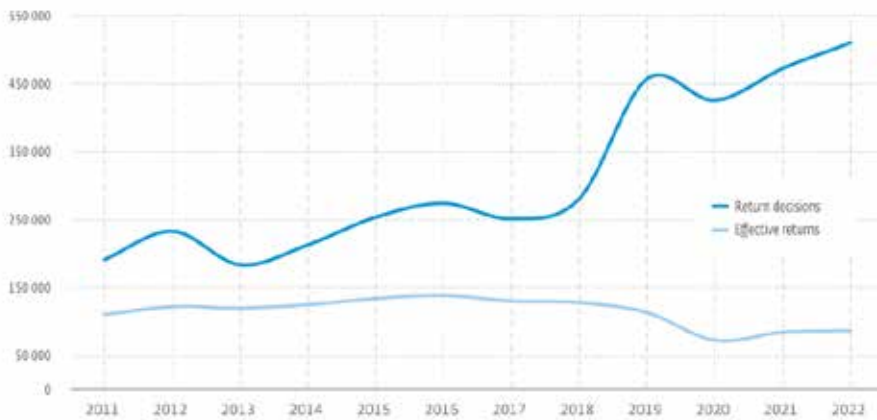
What are the challenges on the way to more returns?

The European Commission's policy document towards an operational strategy for more effective returns issued in January 2023 points to the current challenges and obstacles on the way to an effective return system. Specifically, the document mentions problems such as lengthy administrative and judicial procedures, difficulties in preventing absconding, insufficient resources, and limited administrative capacity to follow up on return decisions.

In fact, available indicators related to the irregular migration management show large discrepancies between irregular migration, negative asylum decisions, and return decisions on one hand and the effective returns on the other. The number of effective returns is many times lower than those reported for irregular migration and asylum indicators.

This shows a considerable mismatch between return and migration/ asylum processes in the reporting countries. Moreover, the chronological evolution of the average number of return decisions issued per one return suggests the return procedures are getting increasingly lengthy.

There is a growing divergence between the Western Balkan countries, which have a positive track record on return cooperation,



and rather unreliable with the currently available return data. An enhanced data collection and more reporting completeness, timeliness and accuracy would be required to better understand the situation.

The following outlook discusses some selected regions and third-countries of origin which are deemed most likely to increase the return caseload in 2023.

Returns to West African countries

The current numbers of asylum applications by West African nationals and detected West African illegal stayers do not suggest the future return caseload will necessarily increase. However, the irregular migration pressure from West African countries on the Central Mediterranean route rose significantly in the fourth quarter of 2022. Until September 2022, about 800 irregular migrants from that region were registered in the Central Mediterranean per month but then this indicator surged to 3 700 in December.

The recent increase in West African migrants arriving in the Central Mediterranean has not yet had any major effect on the number of secondary movements and return decisions.

However, a further increase on this route is likely, and the average asylum recognition rate² is at around merely 30%. In addition, the level of cooperation with West African countries' authorities is rather low, resulting in only few returns being

and other regions, such as Western African states, to which returns tend to be difficult. Hence while the ratio between the reported decisions per effective return actually carried out has stayed fairly similar for Western Balkan nationals, the ratio has steeply risen for Western African, Southern Asian and Northern African nationals. This suggests that the relation between decisions and effective returns can be used as an approximate indicator for the effectiveness of returns.

The Commission's policy document also points out the challenges posed by insufficient level of cooperation

with countries of origin. MS data show that third-country authorities issued 18 413 Emergency Travel Documents (ETDs) in 2022, which is a 5% decrease in relation to the previous year. The number of Member States' requests for identification, verification, or ETDs to consular authorities on the other hand increased to 61 464 (+11%).

What is the expected impact of the challenges to the return caseload and what nationalities are most likely to add to it in 2023?

An overall forecast of the return situation in 2023 would be complex



carried out compared with the number of return decisions issued.

Returns to North African countries

The irregular migration pressure towards the EU as regards North African nationals,

increased considerably in 2022. In the second half of 2022, the number of detections of illegal stayers increased by around 70%. Most of the increase was due to migrant boat arrivals in Italy. Most of the irregular migrants coming from North Africa applied for asylum. Asylum authorities of EU MS/SAC issued around 25 000 negative asylum decisions to nationals

of this region in 2022, with the recognition rate of only around 20%. EU MS/SAC reported about 112 000 return decisions, but only around 8 500 North African country nationals were effectively returned.

The migration pressure on the

Western Balkans route eased off as Serbia tightened its entry rules and other Western Balkan countries aligned visa policies with the EU. However, the currently observed increase on the Central Mediterranean route, a large 2022 backlog of pending return decisions, and a rather insufficient and unsustainable level of cooperation with third-country authorities point to an increased caseload of returns to North Africa in 2023.

The European Union is both a source region of victims of trafficking in human beings (THB) and an important destination for trafficked persons originating from third countries. Based on Eurostat data for 2021, 41% of the reported THB victims were non-EU nationals. Sexual exploitation (56%) remained the prevailing form of trafficking in the EU, followed by labour exploitation (29%). Other reported types of exploitation included forced

crime, forced begging, benefit fraud, and removal of organs. Women and girls comprised the largest group of identified THB victims (68%), both among the EU and non-EU nationals.

There is a strong correlation between the sex of the victims and the purpose of trafficking. The great majority of victims of sexual exploitation were females (87%), of which 27% were girls under the age of 18. By contrast, 66% of the victims of forced labour were male.

The increased migration flows in 2022 also raised the risk of exploitation of vulnerable people on the move. In general, direct forms of abuse, e.g., use of threat or force during smuggling activities, are easier to identify, but more subtle ways of coercion can be less obvious and difficult to detect. Moreover, victims might be unaware that they are trafficked, which makes the detection of THB at the borders even harder.

The nationality composition of THB victims in Europe has been changing dynamically, often following the developments of humanitarian crises around the world. Despite the lower numbers of non-EU victims reported in the past few years (mostly due to COVID-19 travel restrictions), available data indicate that persons arriving via migratory routes from North and West Africa, Central Asia and the Middle East and the Western Balkans have been at continuous risk of labour and sexual exploitation.



According to Eurostat data, there were over 7000 THB victims identified in 2021, which was in line with the trend of the previous years. However, the actual number of victims was likely much higher than the reports suggested, as these statistics only capture victims that become known to the registering entities, and so many victims go undetected.

For example, just one recent international investigation supported by Europol revealed a criminal network involved in forced prostitution of hundreds of Chinese women across Europe.

Despite the overall decline in registered cases, in 2022, the hidden forced prostitution of victims from African countries in Europe most likely continued at an unchanged level. Countries of first registration of African migrants in the south of Europe, as well as EU Member States in Western Europe remain top destinations for human trafficking. North Africa is perceived as the main trafficking hub of African THB victims

experiencing sexual and labour exploitation in countries of Africa, Europe, and the Middle East. For example, over the last several years Nigerian, Congolese, Cameroonian and other African women among the migrants arriving in Cyprus and countries in southeast

Europe were reportedly trafficked by violent African criminal groups and ended up forced into prostitution in private apartments, bars, and nightclubs.

Institutional instability and militarisation of the societies in countries with long-lasting conflicts have been generating economic inequalities and security threats, which are among the main reasons for large population displacements.

In turn, displacements in the wake of military conflicts and socio-political turmoil expose members of vulnerable groups to the influence of organised crime. In 2022, long-lasting conflicts in the Middle East and Africa remained in the shadow of the ongoing war in Ukraine, yet the abuse of rights of women and

children from these regions continue to be of great concern. Moreover, while migrant smuggling is a distinct criminal phenomenon, it subjects the irregular migrants and refugees to various forms of abuse and creates big profit opportunities for criminal networks.

In 2022, the Russian aggression against Ukraine significantly changed the nationality composition of refugees arriving in the EU. According to UNHCR, the total number of refugees worldwide rose by a record 35 per cent, or 8.9 million people, to reach 34.6 million at the end of 2022.³ More than half of that number were Syrians, Venezuelans and Ukrainians, as the increase was largely driven by people fleeing the war in Ukraine. A further estimated 6.3 million people remained displaced within this country.

Separation from families and long journeys across several countries to reach safe destinations makes refugees and migrants vulnerable to violations of their rights such as sexual exploitation, labour exploitation, forced criminality, and forced begging. In 2022, the number of related incidents was kept low by efforts to prevent forced prostitution of women and illegal adoptions of Ukrainian children, as well as the adequate care provided by foster institutions in the EU Member States. However, the risk of trafficking might be rising in view of an increasing number of casualties, both military and civilian, and of unparented children.



While the dimension of child trafficking often remains unknown, reported cases mostly involve sexual exploitation, forced begging, and forced crime. Based on Eurostat data, the share of children among the reported THB victims in Europe remains a worrying indicator, with many EU Member States registering high numbers of trafficked children in the EU.

Over the last few years, the majority of the children arrived in the EU with the migration flows along the sea routes, mostly in the Central Mediterranean, but also in the Eastern Mediterranean and the Balkans. The year 2022 was no exception, with around 35 000

children being reported among the irregular migrants, almost 16 000 of which were unaccompanied minors.

With the lack of legal pathways, the health and life of migrants are put in danger. This is especially true for children, who are among the most vulnerable.

Migrant smuggling often places those involved in dire and inhumane conditions and can also result in different forms of exploitation of vulnerable people.

Migrants are transported in unseaworthy boats through the Mediterranean and the English Channel or put in hidden compartments of road vehicles along

land routes in the Balkans. Minors are also used as facilitators of other migrants crossing the external borders and making secondary movements, as they can count on lighter sentences when caught by law-enforcement authorities. It is also necessary to extend continuous care and support to child migrants who have already reached Europe, as unaccompanied minors are often exposed to the influence of criminal groups in their country of residence. For example, recent investigations in countries in Western Europe underlined the risk of minors either going missing or being coerced into crime.

Although the signs of trafficking at the borders become less obvious with the increasing use of internet for the recruitment of THB victims and the offering of facilitation services alike, the prevention measures at the borders remain important for reducing the risks for vulnerable persons. Constant monitoring of specific risk indicators is recommended, as well as cooperation of law enforcement with NGOs and cultural mediators for early identification and prevention of exploitation of vulnerable individuals among migrants and refugees.

Looking forward, long-lasting instability in Africa and the Middle East continue to generate regional population displacements and migration flows towards the EU. With limited institutional support to vulnerable people in conflict regions around the world as well

as discrimination of women and children the risk of human trafficking will most likely persist. This pertains both to migrants in transit and those in destination countries.

Along with sexual exploitation, forced labour remains one of the main risks, especially for long-term displaced persons, including the refugees from Ukraine. Criminal networks are likely to continue to take advantage of the war in Ukraine, inter alia attempting to lure women into prostitution and bring illegal workers from Ukraine to Europe. A rise in illegal practices is expected to occur in 2023 with a growing demand for seasonal workers in sectors such as

agriculture, hospitality, construction, etc. The risk of child trafficking also remains high as OCGs might try to bring unaccompanied minors from Ukraine for the purpose of illegal adoption or various forms of exploitation.

As humanitarian crises and military conflicts increase the number of unaccompanied minors arriving in Europe along the migratory routes, the risk of child exploitation significantly rises. As in the previous years, the high number of unaccompanied minors will be one of the main concerns for EU Member States in 2023.

Part 1 of Frontex Risk Analysis 2023/2024 was included September/October issue of BSR.

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2023 State of Biometrics Report highlights key trends to watch now



The Biometrics Institute released the fifth edition of its State of Biometrics Report. The report addresses important trends that are likely to impact on how we use biometric technology responsibly and maintain citizens' trust in the benefits they deliver.

The Institute's Future Direction Group (FDG) has identified four significant topics for future monitoring:

- Biometrics, cyber security and privacy – The good, the brazen or the breached?
- Generative artificial intelligence (AI) – Friend or foe?
- Explainability and trustworthiness – The less you know, the more you believe

MAOC (N) supports French seizure of 885kg of cocaine off the coast of West Africa



The French amphibious helicopter carrier MISTRAL seized 885kg of cocaine on a fishing vessel off the coast of Liberia.

- Maturity of digital identity – A need to cooperate and interoperate

“The theme of artificial intelligence (AI) runs throughout the report,” said Isabelle Moeller, CEO of the Biometrics Institute. “Developments in AI have accelerated substantially over the past months, not only creating excitement about the opportunities but raising many concerns over how it will be applied. Is there an opportunity for biometrics to counter some of the concerns? Could biometrics help to detect deepfakes created by AI? Standards-development is critical and the work is ongoing. We will certainly keep an eye on AI in all our upcoming discussions.”

The report stresses the importance of explaining what we do with biometrics as this is the only way to create trust amongst citizens. A common approach and understanding of what biometrics are is critical. Audits are an area we draw specific attention to.

It also focuses on digital identity, noting that interoperability and cooperation are essential for how we move forward.

The French Navy – working together with the anti-drugs office (OFAST) – managed to secure another important cocaine seizure, in an area that has been particularly problematic in recent years.

This large-scale operation was carried out on the basis of intelligence provided by the US Drug Enforcement Agency (DEA), in cooperation with the British National Crime Agency (NCA) and the Brazilian authorities.

The 15-metre-long fishing vessel had left the South American coast days earlier, and it is believed the cocaine was ultimately bound for Europe.

MARITIME SURVEILLANCE SYSTEMS: NAVIGATING COLLABORATION AND RIVALRY IN THE SOUTHERN MEDITERRANEAN

*By Adnane KAAB PhD in
International Law*

The southern shore of the Mediterranean Sea, with its rich history and strategic significance, stands as a confluence of complex geopolitical currents. In this maritime theater, where the blue waters connect nations and serve as both a bridge and a barrier, the delicate interplay of collaboration and rivalry in maritime surveillance systems takes center stage. Border security experts find themselves at the forefront of a dynamic balancing act—crafting strategies that enhance security through collaboration

while mitigating the risks posed by geopolitical rivalries.

This article embarks on a comprehensive journey into the heart of this balancing act, exploring the intricate landscape of maritime surveillance on the southern Mediterranean. From collaborative initiatives that transcend borders to the technological rivalries shaping strategic dynamics, we delve into the successes, challenges, and opportunities that define the current security paradigm.

In the first part, we navigate through the currents of collaboration, examining real-world case studies that illustrate how nations along the southern Mediterranean are joining forces. From joint patrols to shared technological advancements, we uncover the tangible outcomes of collaborative efforts, showcasing the potential for a unified approach to safeguarding maritime borders.

The second part takes us into the depths of geopolitical dynamics and the undercurrents of rivalry. Beyond the surface of technological advancements lies a narrative of individual pursuits, strategic ambitions, and territorial disputes. As countries vie for control over critical maritime routes, we explore the complexities of navigating these rivalries and the strategies employed to ensure regional stability.

As we chart this course through the waves of collaboration and rivalry, the article concludes with reflections on the path forward. Diplomacy, conflict resolution, and international cooperation emerge as essential compass points for border security experts navigating the complexities of the southern Mediterranean. The goal is clear—to cultivate a maritime environment that is not only secure for the nations within the region but also contributes to a broader international framework of maritime stability.

Join us on this journey as we unravel the layers of maritime surveillance systems in the southern Mediterranean—a tapestry woven with threads of collaboration, rivalry,



and the shared pursuit of security in the shifting tides of geopolitics.

Part 1: Current Landscape of Maritime Surveillance Collaboration

The southern shore of the Mediterranean Sea is a geopolitical crossroads, demanding innovative solutions from border security experts. In this complex region, the development and deployment of maritime surveillance systems stand at the forefront of efforts to ensure security. This article aims to dissect the intricate dance between collaboration and rivalry, illuminating the dynamics shaping the current landscape.

Status of Collaboration:

Existing collaborative initiatives

Collaboration among countries along the southern Mediterranean has not been a mere theoretical concept but a tangible reality. The Italy-Tunisia collaboration serves as a lighthouse in the storm of

shared challenges. In 2013, these nations formalized their commitment to jointly combat illegal migration and transnational crime through a comprehensive memorandum of understanding. This agreement set the stage for a multifaceted approach, seamlessly blending diplomatic, intelligence, and operational measures.

The collaboration begins at a diplomatic level, where both nations engage in regular consultations to align their strategic goals. These high-level talks foster mutual understanding and a shared vision for maritime security in the region.

Intelligence Exchange Integral to this collaboration is the exchange of actionable intelligence. Italy and Tunisia have established secure communication channels, facilitating the real-time sharing of information related to maritime threats. This intelligence fusion has led to a significant reduction in the success rates of illegal migration attempts.



The collaborative efforts extend into operational domains, with joint maritime patrols patrolling the waters between the two nations. This operational integration not only strengthens the physical presence in critical areas but also enables swift responses to emerging threats.

The success of this collaboration is measured not only by the numbers—reduced incidents of illegal migration and dismantled criminal networks—but also by the establishment of a framework that other nations in the region can emulate.

Technological Integration:

The convergence of technological prowess is a cornerstone of successful collaboration. Spain and Morocco's joint efforts in technological development along the Strait of Gibraltar exemplify this. By pooling resources for the development of advanced surveillance technologies, these nations transcend historical

differences for the sake of regional security. The result is not merely a technological alliance but a strategic collaboration that enhances maritime domain awareness and operational effectiveness.

Challenges and Opportunities:

While collaboration brings undeniable benefits, it is not without its challenges. The ongoing conflict in Libya serves as a stark reminder of how political tensions and historical rivalries can impede collective efforts. However, these challenges also present opportunities for learning and improvement. Recognizing the nuances of collaboration, including potential pitfalls, is crucial for crafting resilient strategies that withstand the complexities of the region.

As for the challenges, political tensions in the region often hinder the establishment and sustenance of collaborative initiatives. The historical context and sensitive

geopolitical issues can make diplomatic negotiations challenging. For instance, longstanding disputes between Turkey and Greece can create roadblocks in forming broader collaborations, impacting the effectiveness of joint surveillance efforts.

Moreover, not all nations along the southern Mediterranean possess equal resources. Disparities in economic strength and technological capabilities can strain collaborative efforts. While some countries may contribute advanced technologies, others may struggle to match such contributions. Bridging these resource gaps requires careful negotiation and, in some cases, external support.

On the other hand, with regard to the opportunities, crisis situations, such as natural disasters or security threats, can serve as catalysts for enhanced cooperation. The urgency imposed by a crisis can push nations to put aside differences and collaborate for the greater good. For example, the response to a regional maritime disaster could trigger a collaborative effort that transcends political rivalries.

The establishment of multilateral frameworks provides a structured approach to collaboration. Regional organizations or international bodies can play a pivotal role in facilitating discussions and negotiations. The Mediterranean Security Dialogue, initiated by the United Nations, could serve as a platform for fostering collaborative initiatives, providing a neutral ground for discussions.

Case Studies:

Italy-Tunisia Collaboration: A Model for Success

The Italy-Tunisia collaboration is a beacon of success in the realm of maritime surveillance. Beyond the formal agreements, the tangible outcomes—reduced illegal migration, dismantling of transnational criminal networks, and enhanced search and rescue capabilities—underscore the practical benefits of collaborative initiatives. This case serves as a testament to the potential impact of strategic partnerships in safeguarding borders and ensuring regional stability.

Spain-Morocco Technological integration:

Spain and Morocco's collaborative venture into technological integration is not merely about sharing tools but about shaping the future of regional security. The development and deployment of joint surveillance technologies along the Strait of Gibraltar symbolize a commitment to overcoming historical tensions. This case study showcases that collaboration isn't just a means to an end; it's an ongoing process that evolves and adapts to meet the ever-changing security landscape.

Greece-Egypt Joint Maritime Patrols:

In the eastern Mediterranean, Greece and Egypt have established a noteworthy collaboration through joint maritime patrols. This initiative aims to address shared concerns,

including illegal fishing and maritime smuggling. The cooperative patrols not only enhance the surveillance capabilities of both nations but also contribute to the broader stability of the region. This case study highlights the diverse ways in which collaboration can manifest, tailored to specific regional challenges.

Part 2: Geopolitical Dynamics and Rivalry in Maritime Surveillance

The southern shore of the Mediterranean Sea, while fostering collaborative efforts, is not immune to the currents of geopolitical rivalry. As nations vie for strategic advantages and control over critical maritime routes, the delicate balance between cooperation and competition emerges as a crucial factor shaping the effectiveness of maritime surveillance systems.

Rivalry in Technological Advancements:

Competing Surveillance Technologies:

Beneath the veneer of collaboration lies a parallel narrative of individual nations independently advancing their surveillance technologies. Greece and Turkey, both key players in the region, are investing autonomously in cutting-edge surveillance capabilities. This technological arms race introduces a layer of complexity, potentially creating disparities in regional maritime security capabilities. The question then arises: How does the region collectively address these disparities for a more cohesive and

effective security framework?

Strategic Control and Influence:

The strategic chessboard of the southern Mediterranean involves not only technological prowess but also territorial dominance. Disputes over Exclusive Economic Zones (EEZs) in the eastern Mediterranean, involving Greece, Turkey, and Cyprus, underscore the intersection of geopolitical interests and maritime surveillance. The control of these zones extends beyond borders; it symbolizes control over valuable resources, amplifying the stakes in regional rivalries. The challenge lies in navigating these waters without compromising broader regional stability.

Risk Mitigation Strategies:

Diplomacy and conflict resolution:

Navigating the intricacies of geopolitical rivalry requires adept diplomacy. Recent talks between Greece and Turkey, facilitated by the European Union, serve as a shining example of diplomatic channels actively resolving maritime disputes. Diplomacy, when employed strategically, becomes a linchpin for easing tensions and finding common ground amid regional rivalries. It is not a panacea, but a crucial tool in the arsenal of border security experts.

International cooperation:

The role of international organizations becomes pivotal in mitigating risks associated with rivalry. Organizations such as the United Nations and the European

Union can function as impartial mediators, fostering dialogue and encouraging collaboration. A regional security framework, endorsed and supported by international actors, could provide a neutral ground for resolving conflicts and advancing shared security goals. In this way, the region can transcend the limitations of individual nations and collectively address the challenges posed by geopolitical rivalries.

In conclusion the realm of maritime surveillance systems on the southern shore of the Mediterranean Sea, the duality of collaboration and rivalry paints a nuanced picture. The region's border security experts find themselves at the intersection

of political intricacies and historical tensions, requiring a pragmatic approach.

Balancing collaboration and rivalry demands a keen understanding of the geopolitical landscape, a commitment to diplomatic solutions, and a reliance on international cooperation. As border security measures evolve, the southern Mediterranean has the potential to transition towards a more secure and stable maritime environment—a goal that not only benefits the nations within the region but also contributes to the broader international maritime security framework.

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Research Conducted in Côte d'Ivoire and Uganda Outlines Ways to Strengthen Responses in Small and Mid-Size Cities to Forced Displacement & Migration



Migrants and displaced persons increasingly are making the move from rural areas and settling in small and mid-sized urban cities, particularly in sub-Saharan Africa, which is one of the world's most rapidly urbanizing regions. Drawn by the promise of greater job opportunities and more direct access to health, education and social services, these newcomers are part of a growing population boom in cities of 150,000 to 5 million people. As a result, many secondary cities are facing increased pressure to accommodate native and foreign-born populations, placing further strain on their infrastructure and economies.

A new Migration Policy Institute (MPI) report explores ways to build effective programming and improve socio-economic inclusion for migrants and refugees, drawing in part on research conducted in Côte d'Ivoire and Uganda. It examines the socio-economic challenges raised by the presence of mobile populations in these urban contexts, and the gender dynamics at play. It also delves into how cities, states and civil society have sought to respond to challenges, and outlines how local, national and international partners can help address these difficulties and advance social inclusion.

Having come to secondary cities in search of opportunity, newcomers can face a variety of challenges. In some contexts, municipalities actually have fewer resources than rural areas—including proportionally fewer public services and fewer services targeted to the specific needs of displaced populations

compared to camps or settlements for refugees and internally displaced persons. And education and health care systems may not be equipped to handle migration- and displacement-related challenges, nor to deliver services in a culturally sensitive way. Women and girls usually face additional obstacles in accessing support in response to sexual and gender-based violence, trafficking, female genital mutilation and other vulnerabilities. Finally, economic opportunities for migrant and displaced populations, in particular women, remain largely outside the formal sector in many low- and middle-income countries, leaving them more vulnerable to sudden economic shocks and exploitation.

Even as municipal authorities are mobilizing to respond to these growing socio-economic issues, they face a range of overlapping challenges that constrain their ability to effectively respond to migration and displacement. "Many have an incomplete picture of who is moving to and staying in their cities, they generally have limited legal authority and capacity to act on migration issues, mechanisms for effectively engaging migrants and displaced persons in policymaking are often lacking and many local entities have few opportunities to connect and coordinate with international humanitarian and development actors active on migration and refugee issues," write MPI analysts Samuel Davidoff-Gore and Camille Le Coz.

They suggest prioritizing better data gathering, sharing and analysis; capacity building for municipalities to strengthen their knowledge of migration and associated gender dynamics; improved consultation between municipal actors and migrants and displaced persons; and more opportunities for city-level actors to coordinate with international humanitarian and development actors.

Adoption of these strategies "can help ensure that migrants, displaced persons and host communities in secondary cities alike are socio-economically better off, and that these cities can grow sustainably," the authors conclude.

Eleven arrested for smuggling migrants from Greece to Northern Europe



A Greek-Belgian investigation supported by Europol and Eurojust has led to the dismantling of a criminal network that smuggled migrants by air from Athens

to Northern Europe. The operation, which involved the Belgian Federal Police and Public Prosecutor's office of Halle-Vilvoorde, and the Hellenic Police and the Court of Athens, was also assisted by Norwegian and Swedish authorities.

The criminal network, mainly composed of Egyptian and Syrian nationals, has been operating since January 2022, facilitating the illegal secondary movements of migrants from Greece to Northern Europe, mainly Norway, through Belgium. The suspects facilitated the transport of migrants via legitimate travel agencies, while also having connections with forgers to supply migrants with fake travel identification documents.

Five right-wing terrorists arrested throughout Europe with the support of Eurojust and Europol

Eurojust and Europol have supported the competent authorities in Belgium, Croatia, Germany, Lithuania, Romania and Italy in an international operation against right-wing terrorism. During a joint action day, 5 suspects were apprehended and an additional 7 others interrogated across the different countries. Furthermore, data carriers and weapons were seized.

The suspects allegedly belong to a right-wing organisation that uses an online platform for terrorist-

related activities, including the dissemination of violent extremist propaganda, the active recruitment of new members and for sharing manuals of 3D printed weapons. Some of the members of the organisation are believed to have written their own manifesto and to have access to weapons.

Despite of the young age of some of the suspects, indicators showed that there was an increased risk that some of them would take action soon.

Europol and Eurojust support Czech and Ukrainian police in taking down multi-million euro voice phishing gang

The Czech and Ukrainian police have disrupted, with the support of Europol and Eurojust, a prolific phishing gang believed to have defrauded victims across Europe of tens of millions of euros. In Czechia alone, the damage caused by this criminal group is estimated at over EUR 8 million (CZK 195 000 000).

As a result of this investigation, six suspects were already arrested in Ukraine and four in the Czech Republic in April this year. Locations in Czechia (Domazlice,

Rokycany and Plzen) and Ukraine (Dnipropetrovsk) were searched during the raids, including the homes of the accused, vehicles and call centres.

Mobile phones, SIM cards and computer equipment were seized during the crackdown.



Illegal wildlife trade has become one of the ‘world’s largest criminal activities’



Environmental and wildlife crime has become one of the world's largest and most profitable crime sectors and continues to grow as it pushes many species to the brink of extinction, warned INTERPOL at the United for Wildlife Summit.

With the black market for illegal wildlife products worth up to USD 20 billion per year, poaching and the illegal wildlife trade has become a major area of activity for organized crime groups and is increasingly linked with armed violence, corruption and other forms of organized crime.

Poaching and the trade in illegal wildlife is not just damaging the environment and killing at-risk species, but is costing the life of wildlife enforcement officers, with up to 100 rangers killed by poachers annually while protecting wildlife in their natural habitats.

This context underpins today's agreement at the United for Wildlife Summit between The Royal Foundation and INTERPOL on future joint efforts to protect endangered species from illegal wildlife trafficking.

Global illicit medicines targeted by INTERPOL operation

The annual campaign targets illicit medicines that pose a significant threat to consumer safety, including counterfeit medicines and medicines diverted from legal and regulated supply chains. They also represent a major source of income for transnational organized crime groups and support other crime activity.

Operation Pangea XVI has led to 72 arrests worldwide, the seizure of potentially dangerous pharmaceuticals worth more than USD 7 million, 325 new investigations

and the closure of more than 1,300 criminal websites.

Erectile dysfunction medications continue to be the most seized medicine globally, accounting for 22 per cent of seizures during the operation. Psychotherapeutic agents such as antidepressants, anti-anxiety medicines and stimulants were a close second at 19 per cent, followed by sex hormones and gastrointestinal medicines at 12 per cent respectively.

Securing the 2024 Olympic Games: INTERPOL signs agreement with France to strengthen police cooperation

Ahead of the Paris 2024 Olympic and Paralympic Games, a cooperation agreement has been signed between France and INTERPOL to strengthen security and international cooperation during this major global event.

International cooperation is essential to the success of major events and keeping athletes, spectators and all participants safe.



Passenger data exchange to counter terrorist travel focus of OSCE-UN seminar



The OSCE Transnational Threats Department and United Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism (UNOCT) delivered the 7th Passenger Data Exchange Seminar as a back-to-back event with the 3rd in-person meeting of the Eastern European Informal Working Group on Passenger Data (EE IWG).

The event gathered almost one hundred passenger

data experts both in person and online to put into practice the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) resolution 2396 and identify needs for technical assistance across the EE IWG member states. The resolution aims to prevent the return of foreign terrorist fighters and, to do so, it mandates strengthening border security by establishing passenger data exchange systems, bilateral and multilateral information-sharing as well as collecting Advance Passenger Information (API) and Passenger Name Record (PNR) data.

The experts emphasized the need to establish human rights-focused passenger data legislation as well as technical and financial support in applying it. They also highlighted the benefits of engaging with airlines from the early stage and how to analyse and profile passenger data. IT service providers presented their API/PNR analysis systems.

OSCE is strengthening the institutional capabilities of the Border Service of the State Committee for National Security of the Kyrgyz Republic to counter transnational threats

As part of an extrabudgetary initiative aimed at mitigating the risks associated with the illicit movement of small arms, ammunition, and explosives across the State Border of the Kyrgyz Republic, the OSCE is enhancing the institutional capacity of the Border Service of the State Committee for National Security of the Kyrgyz Republic to effectively counter transnational threats.

The training facility underwent extensive renovations, with multiple classrooms being refurbished and equipped to facilitate training in key areas such as weapons service, engineering service, border control organization and medical support for troops. Each classroom is furnished with essential equipment and augmented with visual and interactive teaching aids.

Countering internet use for terrorist purposes focus of OSCE-led exercises in Serbia

The National Table-Top Exercise (TTX) in Belgrade on countering the use of the internet for terrorist purposes, directed participants' discussion towards generating actionable recommendations at both policy and operational levels within the context of Serbia's national security priorities and aimed at enhancing the co-ordination of national efforts and combating the threats arising from the misuse of the internet by violent extremists and terrorist groups. Participants engaged in interactive, scenario-based exchanges, enhancing their

expertise on countering terrorism-related online threats prevalent in Serbia, and ways to tackle these based on practical human rights-centred approaches.



BOESL and IOM Bangladesh sign MoU on Enhancing Migration Management and Ethical Recruitment



Bangladesh Overseas Employment and Services Limited (BOESL) and the IOM Bangladesh signed a Cooperation Agreement on the sidelines of the Strategic Consultation between IOM and Ministry of Expatriates' Welfare and

Overseas Employment.

Under the framework of this agreement, BOESL and IOM will coordinate, collaborate and jointly implement activities related to awareness-raising campaigns, job fairs, development of country specific Pre-Departure Orientation (PDO) and Pre-Employment Orientation (PEO) materials, and overseas market exploration for the recruitment of aspirant Bangladeshi migrant workers.

"We need to move away from low per capita remittance through skill development of migrant workers and exploration of new destination countries" said Dr. Ahmed Munir Saleheen, Senior Secretary of Ministry of Expatriates' Welfare and Overseas Employment

IOM and Nigeria Immigration Service Launch Personnel Training Resource Centre in Kwara State

The IOM, in partnership with the Nigeria Immigration Service (NIS), has launched a new Personnel Training Resource Centre (PTRC) at the Kwara State Command of the Service. This initiative is part of the ongoing "NIS Training Strategy Implementation Programme - Phase 2 (TSI-2) Project," led by IOM and funded by the Government of the Netherlands.

The project, which builds on the successful pilot phase, aims to enhance the capacity of border

officials to address migration-related issues. It also seeks to raise awareness about the importance of continuously improving and monitoring the quality of border security and management. To date, more than 3,000 NIS officers and 190 NAPTIP officers have received training across nine established PTRCs nationwide, including those at NIS HQ, Abuja, as well as in Anambra, Edo, Cross River, Kano, Kebbi, Lagos, Borno, and Ogun State Commands.

IOM Nigeria Announces Winners of the Short Film Contest on 'Combating Human Trafficking'

The IOM Nigeria is proud to announce the winners of the IOM Nigeria 2023 Short Film Contest on 'Combating Human Trafficking.' This contest has drawn attention to the critical issue of human trafficking through the lens of creativity and storytelling.

Through their films, participants demonstrated their dedication to addressing this grave violation of human rights and driving real change.

The winners were selected in various categories, each of which highlighted different aspects of the fight against human trafficking.

The winning entries in the IOM Nigeria Short Film Contest on 'Combating Human Trafficking' were:

First Place: Zanifa by Osita-Obasi Ijeoma; Second Place: Poached by Adeola Andrea Peregrino; Third Place: Halima by Rimamkongnde Shamaki



Record arrivals on Western African route in October



The number of detections of irregular border crossings at EU's external borders rose by 18% in the first ten months

of 2023 to nearly 331 600, the highest total for the period since 2015, according to preliminary calculations*.

The Western African route has seen the biggest rise in the number of irregular crossings, which nearly doubled so far this year to over 27 700. This is the highest total for this migratory route since Frontex began collecting data in 2009. The number of arrivals (13 000) in October was also the highest monthly total on record.

2 600 standing corps officers and Frontex staff are involved in various operations supporting member states and neighbouring countries in protecting the EU's external borders and fighting crime.

505 stolen cars, 2 000 vehicle parts seized in Frontex-led operation



Operation Mobile 6 took place on 9-20 October at the EU's external land borders, as well as at the borders in Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo*, Moldova, Montenegro, North Macedonia, and Serbia. It involved around 400 law enforcement officers from 25 countries who carried out intensified checks in several locations along the EU's external borders. Interpol and Europol supported the action with their expertise and access to databases. Thanks to Interpol and their contacts with police authorities outside Europe, several stolen cars were stopped in international ports.

38 arrests in action against agricultural labour exploitation

Europe-wide operation identifies 1 583 workers affected by labour exploitation, including 353 possible human trafficking victims.

Between 13 and 21 September 2023, Frontex took part in Europe-wide coordinated action days against human trafficking for the purpose of labour exploitation in the agricultural sector. The operation was led by France and supported by Europol and the European Labour Authority. It involved a wide range of law enforcement authorities, including police, immigration and border guards, labour inspectorates and tax authorities from 17 countries. 6 847 officers from national authorities took part in operational activities on the ground.

Behind the sobering figures reported by the participating law enforcement and labour authorities are an equal

number of persons affected by this ruthless exploitation. Workers in the agricultural sector, especially those in low-skilled and informal roles, face a substantial risk of exploitation, which is even higher for those working in seasonal jobs. Criminal networks often recruit victims from their home countries and subject them to long hours, low wages and harsh conditions, with no possibility of returning home. Exploitation tactics include the use of fake documents and violations of minimum wage laws, with EU citizens exploited year-round and non-EU citizens mostly in seasonal roles.



Wildlife sniffer dogs to hit a century in India



The start of training for a fresh group of 11 young dogs and their 22 handlers has begun at the Basic Training Centre, Indo-Tibetan Border Police Force (BTC-ITBP) camp in Panchkula, Haryana. This training session represents an important milestone for the wildlife sniffer dog squads of TRAFFIC and WWF-

India, bringing the total number of trained dogs to an impressive 105.

The 6-9 month old Belgian Malinois dogs and their handlers will undergo rigorous training at BTC-ITBP for approximately seven to eight months, learning skills to detect and curb wildlife crime.

“Popularly known as Super Sniffers, the wildlife sniffer dogs trained under TRAFFIC and WWF-India’s programme have been highly successful in seizing wild species contraband from smugglers and catching poachers in the act,” said Dr Merwyn Fernandes, Associate Director, TRAFFIC India office. “Much like with detecting drugs or explosives, these dogs use their incredible sense of smell to detect various wild species parts and derivatives in

trade, including those from tigers, elephants, and rhinos, deer meat, live birds, snakes, porcupines, red sanders, turtles, and tortoises.”

After finishing the training, the wildlife sniffer dog squads will join the forest departments of Uttarakhand, Jharkhand, Maharashtra, Odisha, Chhattisgarh and West Bengal.

Director, BTC-ITBP, Panchkula Haryana, said, “Wildlife crime is growing to become one of the largest crimes that need to be curbed to protect the future of our wildlife. BTC-ITBP has years of experience in training sniffer dogs for crime detection in India, and we have extended our full support in conducting specialised training of sniffer dogs for wildlife crime detection in India. For this, we have partnered with TRAFFIC and WWF-India in their unique programme. The new batch of wildlife sniffer dogs is the fourth to be trained at our centre, and we wish the participants good luck with their training.”

The wildlife sniffer dog training programme at BTC-ITBP is divided into two critical phases. The first phase focuses on developing an emotional and trusting bond between the dog and the handler - crucial to becoming a successful wildlife sniffer dog squad. This is followed by basic obedience training. Later, the dogs learn sniffing and tracking skills, mastering the detection of tiger and leopard skins, bones and other body parts, bear bile, red sanders, and other illegal wild species products.

UN Forum calls for urgent action to end child trafficking

Child trafficking is one of the worst forms of violence against children and urgent, global action is needed to end it.

This is the clear message from the annual meeting of the heads of the 31 international organizations that work together under ICAT – the Inter-Agency Coordination Group Against Trafficking in Persons.

The members of the ICAT group, which is coordinated by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), concluded their meeting at the United Nations in New York with the approval of a ten-point Call to Action for the implementation of comprehensive measures to prevent child trafficking and protect the victims of this crime.

UNODC’s latest report on global human trafficking trends

shows that around 35 per cent, or one in three, of detected victims of trafficking are children.

The research also indicates that trafficked children are subjected to physical or extreme violence at a rate almost two times higher than for adults.

“Shielding children from the horrors of human trafficking is a shared global responsibility. I welcome today’s call to action as an important step forward in our efforts to end the heinous exploitation of children and to protect future generations,” says UNODC Executive Director, Ghada Waly.

ICAT’s Call to Action highlights that child trafficking is closely intertwined with other forms of child exploitation and abuse.

LOVERBOYS

By *Lina Kolesnikova, Security Expert*

At the end of 2022, a controversial UK online influencer and a former kickboxer Andrew Tate was arrested in Romania alongside with his brother. Two men were detained as part of a human trafficking and rape investigation. The DIICOT (Directorate for Investigating Organised Crime and Terrorism) statement said that "...suspects appear to have created an organised crime group with a purpose of recruiting, housing and exploiting women by forcing them to create pornographic content". The statement also claimed that six people were identified as victims of sexual exploitation. The organised crime group used the "loverboy method" to seduce victims with false promises of romantic relations or love. Then, victims are forced mainly to practice prostitution, while not exclusively. Victims of such method could be

identified in other criminal sectors too.

Loverboys technique

There are several ways how this method works. With a help of social networks and dating applications, criminals pose as young people (frequently using fake names and photos), who are, as though, looking for love and relations (that is why they are named loverboys). First, they deceive young women and men (mostly teenage girls and boys) engaging into active messages' exchanges. When the trust is built, victims are proposed to send photos or videos of personal or sexual nature. After getting incriminating materials on victims, criminals switch to blackmailing. They arrange a meeting, and, to victim's surprise, she (he) meets an adult who threatens to upload photos and videos to the Internet. There could be another

modus operandi, when victims do not send photos and video at the messages' phase but are forced to pose naked or have sexual relations at the first meeting and are filmed by criminals for future blackmailing. Subsequently, victims are forced to become prostitutes, for criminals' benefits.

Loverboys could also choose another way of recruitment as they meet girls first, impress them by giving presents, showing care (the grooming stage) and pretend being in love. They offer shelter to girls from marginalised families or those running away from educational institutions. After reaching full emotional and financial dependency of minors, perpetrators force them to prostitution or criminal activities for own benefits.

Most of the victims are very young and have neither strength nor sufficient comprehension of situation to oppose the blackmailing. However, not all victims prostitute only from fear. There are many, who are psychologically controlled by loverboys and/or sincerely in love with them. Pretty often the loverboys are young too, in their twenties in general. According to Belgian NGO Child Focus "the pimps are not only motivated by profit, but also by power through the feeling of taking total control over a person". The organization indicated that criminals derive benefits varied depending on the methods used and the type of clients: "Prices vary from €150 to €300 per hour. Some pimps take teenage girls to cafes and nightclubs. They appeal to a younger audience and prices vary between €20 and €60 depending on the services offered."



Girls are often drugged to become more dependent on their pimps. Relational dependence is often such that, if there is a trial, some victims come to attend the hearings to morally support their "friend".

There are also loverbys, who are victims on one side but, on the other side, they recruit or help in recruiting new girls/boys to stay in good terms with their loverboys and show own importance to pimps.

The method itself is not a new one. In 2020 law enforcement of the UK and Romania arrested 21 members of the organised criminal group, which specialized in trafficking young Romanian girls to the UK, Ireland and Germany for sexual exploitation. This criminal group was active from 2009 and it targeted Romanian girls from vulnerable backgrounds using loverboy's method. Girls were forced to prostitute in Romania first, but after turning the age of 18, were transported to other countries.

Netherlands and Belgium a new paradise for loverboys

Dutch and Belgian authorities raise an alarm by a growing number of teenage girls, who forced to prostitute by loverboys in both countries.

The problem came into public attention in 2016 when Antwerp rapper devoted a song "Amigo" to his friend, a convicted loverboy. The latter used to force girls from vulnerable families, who were placed at special educational institutions, to prostitute for his benefits.

Antwerp is a recognized hub of the phenomenon in Flanders. The city is full of "rogue" hotels, where minors are sexually exploited by organized criminal groups or individuals. The "service" is advertised at the darknet or in closed groups at social networks.

As for girls' profiles, it is difficult to make generalizations. Child Focus in its study points out that "it seems that this can happen to all adolescents who are not feeling well at some point or are in a vulnerable situation". They could be foreign girls but also Belgians. The victims of loverboys are generally recruited in their

country of origin, after which they are brought to Belgium. Pimp begins a relationship with a victim in the her/his country of origin, for example, Romania, Bulgaria, Albania and Nigeria. Another possibility is to see loverboys recruiting and exploiting victims in Belgium itself, in special youth institutions.

Girls of foreign origin arrive either directly from their own countries or via transit countries, where they forced to prostitute as well.

It starts very young, from 12 years old, but the target group is 14-16-year-old teenagers. The most important aspect is the vulnerability of these young people. These are people who, long before coming across the loverboy, encountered significant psychological, emotional or social difficulties. Some have also been in specialised institutions. This vulnerability often explains why many young girls or boys can fall prey to these pimps.

If the bond is primarily an emotional one, violence and threats arrive quickly. Perpetrators also deprive girls of their family or friend context where they could find support. At a certain point, their social circle consists only of boys and girls who are in the circuit themselves. If you then ask a 14-year-old girl or boy to distance herself/himself from it, it is really tough to fulfil.

As for the number of investigations carried out, it rose from 3 in 2015 to 28 in 2018. In four years, 35 people were convicted. Authorities of Antwerp wants to combat such problem with a closer cooperation with NGOs, which work with vulnerable minors in Belgium as well

as in the Netherlands. However, there is no good estimate of how many people, and of which nationalities, find themselves trapped by such scheme.

Geography is played as well. Villages and small towns situated on Dutch-Belgian border served as a base of sexual exploitation of Dutch teenage girls. This new type of pimping uses open intra-European borders and differences of judicial systems, lack of police cooperation and terra incognita factor for victims. Criminals from Netherlands make deal with criminal groups from Belgium for girls' exchange. This leads to girls finding themselves in another country without an easy possibility of contacting anyone from family or friends.

Problem with detection

Important problem is identifying the victims of loverboys. When they are caught prostituting it looks as girls are doing that themselves, without making any connection with a pimping lover. The degree of manipulation and dependency of these young girls remains, unfortunately, little known and sometimes ignored.

Another problem is the fact that Belgian or Dutch victims are not easily perceived as victims of human trafficking; a status generally attributed to victims of foreign origin. Besides this, the victims do not consider themselves as such. They are therefore reluctant to make statements to the police. The youth services of the local police are also still unfamiliar with indicators of human trafficking. Sometimes, minor victims even risk being stigmatized as

problematic children, or could even be considered responsible for acts contrary to good morals.

Another issue lays with families, who often want to silence the problem out of fear losing custody on own children. The latter may arrive as a result of investigation when all blame could go onto parents' shoulders.

Solutions?

All experts believe that raising awareness about the phenomenon is an urgent and important task. However, it is a long-term task, indeed. So far, the big picture of the problem lacks. It is necessary to understand its nature and its extent, to develop an appropriate response approach. The incomplete view is mainly explained by a detection problem. Law enforcement agencies, educational institutions, parents, and teenagers themselves should know about a risk. In some way it is not a new fact that social networks pose serious security risks for their users.

The biggest issue at hand is the victims themselves. We are talking about very young people, open and vulnerable in the sense that by pressing the topic, authorities unwillingly could be breaking their dreams about love. Pimps usually build string victims' psychological bond with them. Victims, therefore, must work on realising they themselves are victims. This demand rebuilding trust with authorities and other people, and that task is very difficult, in most cases. Psychologists and related specialists could probably help the most in freeing victims from their dependencies on pimps.



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- Richard Tenney, Senior Advisor, Cybersecurity, Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency (CISA)
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AGENCY NEWS AND UPDATES

Croatia tightens border checks as Balkan migration route gets busier



Croatia is the latest EU-Schengen member to introduce temporary border checks, attributing the move to an increase in migrants attempting to cross into the country from neighboring states.

Croatia finally joined the EU's border-free Schengen zone at the beginning of this year, allowing free travel for goods and people with permission to move around the EU. But now, less than a year later, the country has decided to apply for temporary checks at its border. According to the country's authorities, the decision is due to an increase in the number of migrants trying to cross without papers from the so-called 'Balkan route'.

In addition to increased controls, Croatia is also planning to open up a camp for registration and processing of incoming migrants. Many migrants are arriving in the country from neighboring Bosnia.

Russia 'sends migrants over border with EU to Finland on scooters and bikes' to destabilise Europe

Russia has been accused of sending migrants over its border with Finland on scooters and bikes in a bid to destabilise the EU.

Finland has an 830-mile border with Russia. Some 300 migrants crossed last week, a huge increase on the average, which is close to zero.

The migrants were mostly young men from Syria, Yemen, Iraq and Somalia.

Finnish officials have said that Russia is equipping the migrants with scooters and bikes to help them get across.

BOC-NAIA seizes Exotic Pests concealed in a postal item



The Bureau of Customs – Ninoy Aquino International Airport (BOC-NAIA) intercepted misdeclared pests from Thailand at the Sub-Port of Central Mail Exchange Center (CMEC).

Through the rigorous screening of postal items, including x-ray scanning and thorough physical examination, a parcel was found to contain 50 concealed pieces of isopods, invertebrates belonging to the greater crustaceans, which were all misdeclared as candy.

The exotic pests were confiscated for lack of import clearance from the Bureau of Plant Industry, violating the Plant Quarantine Law of 1978 (PD 1433) and the Customs Modernization and Tariff Act (CMTA).

Iran, Pakistan call for bolstering border cooperation



Iranian border police commander Brigadier General Ahmad Ali Goudarzi and Director General Pakistan Maritime Security Agency Rear Admiral Imtiaz Ali have urged enhancing border cooperation between the two countries.

Stating that the Persian Gulf and Oman Seas are important for regional countries in terms of security, Brigadier General Goudarzi said that the Islamic Republic of Iran is fighting drug traffickers fiercely and will prevent them from entering the region.

He urged strengthening border control between the two countries through joint patrols and maneuvers to prevent drug trafficking, and illegal fishing, and secure the safety of fishermen at sea.

Rear Admiral Imtiaz Ali, for his part, emphasized promoting interactions and joint management of the maritime borders, noting that the Persian Gulf has a vital place in the world that requires the region's security and stability.

Border Patrol agents find 12 migrants illegally smuggled in Storm Drains in El Paso

A dozen illegal immigrants were caught trying to sneak into the country using



storm drains in Texas' sixth largest city.

Photos shared by authorities show an open manhole, revealing many people inside the sewer system.

Border Patrol agents were tipped off to the migrants' presence in the West Texas tunnels when they saw two people, suspected smugglers, exiting the tunnels and running back to Mexico, the agency said.

For the last year and a half, El Paso had been ground zero for the border crisis -- which has already seen over 188,000 migrants enter the country illegally in the month of October alone.

In recent months, encounters of illegal immigrants in El Paso have fallen, making it the fourth busiest spot along the southern border of the US. .

Import of SPS Goods Via the Short Straits – One Government-run Border Control Post

The Border Target Operating Model (BTOM) delivers a risk-based, proportionate, and technologically advanced approach to import health controls. It recognises as paramount, the imperative to protect the UK's biosecurity from harmful and potentially devastating pests and diseases.

In line with the implementation of the BTOM, the UK Government has carefully reviewed the provision of

government-run BCP facilities in Kent to ensure that we protect the nation's biosecurity, reduce import burdens for trade, whilst also managing operating costs. We are now writing to notify you of the UK Government's intention that SPS checks on goods arriving through the short straits should be undertaken at Sevington Inland Border Control Post (BCP).

Sevington will provide, on one modern and purpose-built site, checks on the whole range of goods and live animals that arrive through both the Port of Dover and Eurotunnel. It is also ideally located to support the smooth flow of goods out of both points of entry without disrupting traffic flows out of the Port of Dover.

The UK Government continues to work with the Kent authorities and all relevant stakeholders to ensure everything is in place for the operational requirements of the BTOM for the short straits.

Report Reveals Aspects Of Illegal Afghan Immigration To Iran



Afghan refugees are trafficked to Iran in a very coordinated manner and officials, from border police to authorities issuing legal documents might be involved, a recent report has revealed.

An investigative report published on Wednesday about the system behind the trafficking on Farazdaily, a news

website in Tehran, featured interviews with people smugglers and refugees.

Currently, the Iranian government is being criticized for its seemingly lenient approach to Afghan refugees. Political opponents of the government have repeatedly warned of its “open borders” policy and possible hidden agendas. In response, the government has accused critics of inciting “Afghan-phobia” as a response to fast-growing anti-Afghan sentiment.

President Ebrahim Raisi’s administration is under scrutiny for allegedly trying to encourage the growth of the Afghan population in Iran, either to compensate for the decline of the native population, or to bolster its military by recruiting young Shiite Hazara Afghans immigrants. Iran has used thousands of Afghan fighters in the Syrian civil war to support strongman Bashar al-Assad.

Latvia and Poland Strengthen Border Control Amid Migrant Pressures



In recent developments detailing the stringent border oversight across European nations, Latvia’s border officials have identified a dozen individuals attempting unauthorized crossing, while Polish border guards on Friday repelled 26 foreigners. Lithuania, specifically, has marked a significant

stand against illegal immigration, revealing circumstances that paint a broad picture of the continent’s ongoing security efforts.

Post the emergency that Belarus’s actions triggered, resulting in a deliberate push of migrants toward the EU borders, Lithuania’s response has been decisive. The country’s border guardians have been steadfast, preventing over 21,700 unauthorized entrants from breaching their frontiers, securing not just their own boundaries but contributing to the broader safety net that Europe is trying to maintain against illegal migration.

MF’s French-led Combined Task Force 150 Seizes \$34 Million in Illegal Narcotics at Sea



A French navy ship working with Combined Maritime Forces seized about \$34 million worth of illegal drugs from a stateless vessel while operating in the international waters of the Indian Ocean, Nov. 4.

The frigate, working under the command of Combined Task Force (CTF) 150, seized 722 kilograms of methamphetamines from the vessel during an interdiction operation.

“This new seizure shows once again the operational effectiveness of Combined

Maritime Forces assets and nations. It illustrates that nations from all around the world are committed to regional maritime security in the Indian Ocean,” said French navy Capt. Yannick Bossu, CTF-150 commander.

This event marks the fourth time in recent months the French-led CTF 150 has interdicted illicit narcotics at sea. In those previous operations, CTF ships seized more than 3,800 kilograms of methamphetamines, heroin, and hashish from stateless vessels during interdiction operations, with a street value of more than \$60 million.

Spanish Civil Guard and Moroccan police authorities carry out a simultaneous joint operation in Morocco and Spain



The operation carried out jointly by the Information Service of the Civil Guard and the Moroccan DGST, under the direction of the Central Investigating Court No. 2 and the National Court Prosecutor’s Office, has arrested two people, in the towns of Lleida and Nador (Morocco), for his alleged links to the terrorist organization DAESH.

Within the framework of activities for the early detection of people who carry out tasks in favor of terrorist organizations, the Civil Guard located two people in

the province of Lleida whose activity led to the initiation of an investigation.

These investigations led to the alleged connection of the detainees with DAESH.

64,500 packs of cigarettes, worth approximately 1.3 million lei, discovered in a container arrived from Pakistan



Border police officers from the Coast Guard, together with customs workers from the South Constanța Border Customs Office, discovered in the Port of Constanța South, in a container arrived from Pakistan, 64,500 packs of counterfeit cigarettes of different brands. The goods, worth approximately 1,300,000 lei, were seized in order to continue the investigations.

French-led Combined Task Force 150 seizes \$27.7 million worth of illicit narcotics in the Indian Ocean



The French Navies ocean patrol ship FS Champlain (A623), operating in support of the French-led Combined Task Force (CTF) 150, seized an estimated \$27.7 million worth of methamphetamine during an interdiction operation in the Indian Ocean.

CTF 150 is the Combined Maritime Forces (CMF) maritime security task force. Their mission is to maintain maritime security and deter illicit activity in international waters outside the Arabian Gulf.

Capt. Yannick Bossu, French Navy and commanding officer of CTF 150 noted, this is the third seizure since France took command of CTF 150 in July 2023.

“The crew of the Champlain seized 596kg of the drug and once again, the international partnership of the Combined Maritime Forces demonstrates its operational effectiveness to improve maritime security in the Indian ocean.” he remarked. CMF strengthens maritime security in its area of operations, by countering activities that finance terrorism and international crime. This is the 12th time France has taken command of CTF 150 since 2002.

34 foreign citizens detected in the hold of a coach and in a specially arranged compartment in a truck

Border police officers at the Romanian Nădlac II Border Crossing Point detected 24 citizens from Bangladesh who tried to illegally cross the border into Hungary, hiding in a specially arranged compartment in a TIR truck

driven by a Lithuanian citizen. Another 10 citizens from Sri Lanka and India were identified in the hold of a coach, without passengers, driven by a Ukrainian citizen accompanied by a Pole and an Indian.

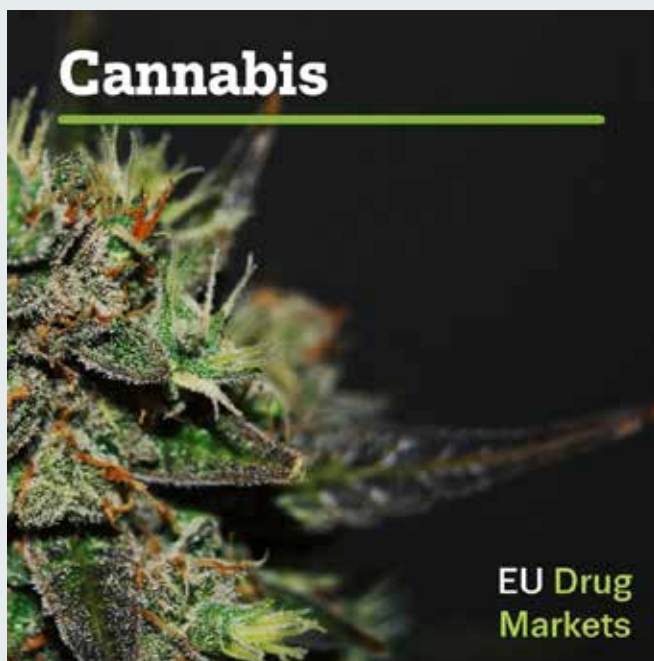
Investigations are being carried out for the commission of migrant trafficking offenses regarding the drivers of the means of transport and their companions, as well as the attempted fraudulent crossing of the state border in the case of the detected persons.

Takedown of Belgian-Greek network smuggling migrants with fake documents by air, eleven arrests



Authorities in Belgium and Greece have dismantled a network that was smuggling irregular migrants via Belgian airports to other European countries, including Norway. Mainly Iraqi migrants travelled from Greece to Charleroi and Brussels on falsified or stolen documents, paying at least between EUR 5 000 and EUR 6 000 per person. During an action day, with the active assistance of Eurojust and Europol, 11 people were arrested and 16 places searched, including two travel agencies in Athens.

2023 EU Drug Markets Analysis from the EMCDDA and Europol



Cannabis products are becoming increasingly potent and diverse, while collaboration between criminal groups is creating new security risks in Europe. These are among the conclusions of a new analysis — EU Drug Market: Cannabis — released by the EMCDDA and Europol.

The analysis describes the illegal European market for cannabis products, from production and trafficking to distribution and use. It also details the processes, materials and criminal actors involved at different stages and levels of the market.

Estimated to be worth at least EUR 11.4 billion annually, the cannabis market is the largest drug market in Europe. Latest estimates show that some 22.6 million adults in the EU (15–64 years) have used cannabis in the last year. In 2021, seized quantities of herbal cannabis and cannabis resin in the EU reached their highest levels in a decade, at 256 tonnes and 816 tonnes respectively. In addition, over 4.3 million cannabis plants were intercepted.

Most of the herbal cannabis found in the EU appears to be grown locally. The Western Balkan region remains a source, albeit less so than in the past. Some cannabis

products, including herbal cannabis, are now smuggled into the EU from North America. As for cannabis resin, Morocco is still the largest supplier to Europe, but there are signs that resin production within the EU may be on the rise.

Latest data reveal a significant increase in the potency of cannabis products. The average potency of herbal cannabis in the EU rose by about 57 % between 2011 and 2021, while the average potency of cannabis resin increased by nearly 200 % in the same period, raising additional health concerns for users.

Cannabis consumer products: increasingly potent and diverse

While cannabis herb and resin still dominate the market, cannabis products in Europe are increasingly diverse, and include a range of natural, semi-synthetic and synthetic cannabinoids available in many different forms. These include oil, a variety of other high-potency extracts known as 'concentrates', vaping products and edibles. Increasingly, at the retail end of the market, commercial marketing strategies are being used both offline and online to advertise and sell products. Some of these products pose a high risk to users' health due to their potency, often exceeding 90 % delta-9-THC. Others may contain dangerous synthetic cannabinoids. In addition, several semi-synthetic cannabinoids (e.g. delta-8-THC, HHC) have emerged in recent years, underlining the need for close monitoring.

An attractive market for serious and organised crime

The cannabis trade in Europe involves a broad range of networks, comprising both EU and non-EU criminals. These networks are highly cooperative, particularly at the wholesale level, sharing resources, building partnerships and providing services from production to distribution.

Some criminal networks act as service providers to cannabis traffickers. Examples include networks that specialise in supplying boats to cannabis resin traffickers, while others provide aerial drones and

helicopters. The methods used to smuggle cannabis have also diversified, highlighting how adaptable and opportunistic criminals can be. In addition to the traditional means of transportation, for example, unmanned semi-submersible vessels have recently been seized during investigations. This booming cannabis trade is not without its repercussions, being linked to violent clashes in several EU countries. Corruption related to the cannabis market also contributes to undermining the rule of law, security and governance.

Environmental impact — the carbon footprint of cannabis cultivation

Today's analysis describes the environmental impact of illicit cannabis production as 'considerable', due to significant water and energy use and chemical pollution. For example, an indoor cannabis cultivation site of 500 plants would potentially consume between 1.6 million and 2 million litres of water per year. Energy use accounts for the largest share of carbon dioxide emissions in the production process, particularly for cannabis grown indoors. Much of the electricity used to cultivate cannabis indoors in the EU is stolen.

The carbon footprint of indoor cultivation is also striking, estimated to be 16 to 100 times higher than outdoor cultivation.

Cannabis policy developments in a complex market

Globally, and within some EU countries, there is an ongoing policy debate around the cannabis market, with a number of changes in the approaches taken to the drug's regulation and control. Today, five EU

Member States (Czechia, Germany, Luxembourg, Malta and the Netherlands) have introduced, or are planning to introduce, new approaches to regulate the supply of cannabis for recreational use. Switzerland also started trials of legal cannabis sales in early 2023. These changes highlight the need to invest in monitoring and evaluation to fully understand their impact on public health and safety (2).

Addressing current threats and boosting preparedness

Today's findings draw on data and information from the EMCDDA's drug monitoring system and from Europol's operational information on serious and organised crime. Taking a threat assessment approach, the agencies highlight key areas for action at EU and Member State level to respond to developments in the illegal cannabis market. These include: improving the strategic intelligence picture; enhancing monitoring of potency and emerging health risks; investing in capacity-building; fostering technological innovation; and strengthening policy, public health and safety responses, including responding to environmental risks.



US DHS DOUBLES DOWN CBP EFFORTS TO CONTINUE TO COMBAT FENTANYL AND SYNTHETIC DRUGS

*By U.S. Customs and Border
Protection*

The U.S. Department of Homeland Security's (DHS) U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP), released an updated, comprehensive approach within its mission set to continue to fight the national opioid epidemic that has killed hundreds of thousands of Americans and impacted countless lives, families, and communities. As the unified border entity under DHS, this CBP strategy complements the Department's strategic plans, and advances President Biden's Unity Agenda Strategy to beat the

overdose epidemic.

Troy A. Miller, CBP's Senior Official Performing the Duties of the Commissioner, unveiled the updated strategy alongside federal, state, and local law enforcement partners at a news conference in San Diego today. Concurrently, CBP senior leadership also led a kickoff meeting with state and local law enforcement partners for Operation Apollo, a joint regional operation that flows from the updated strategy. As the largest law enforcement agency in

the United States, CBP is uniquely positioned to detect, identify, and seize illicit drugs from entering the country and preventing these deadly substances from entering our communities and taking lives.

“The Department of Homeland Security is combating the scourge of fentanyl and other illicit synthetic narcotics with every tool at our disposal,” said Secretary of Homeland Security Alejandro N. Mayorkas. “We have stopped more fentanyl in the last two years than in the previous five years combined and continue to optimize our intelligence and field operations to stop these deadly substances from hitting our streets. At the same time, we are cracking down on the ruthless cartels and criminal organizations that are responsible. CBP plays a critical role, working together with our federal, state, and local partners, and this strategy builds on the tremendous talent of a workforce fiercely dedicated to protecting the American people. The scope of the fentanyl challenge our country faces underscores the need for Congress to provide CBP with the additional resources, equipment, and personnel required to continue this critical work, as outlined in the Administration’s supplemental budget request.”

“In my thirty years as a customs official, the trafficking of synthetic illicit drugs like fentanyl is one of the toughest, most daunting challenges I have ever seen. Through this updated strategy, we will channel the incredible efforts of the men and women of CBP to keep this and other drugs out of the country,” said CBP Senior Official Performing the



Duties of the Commissioner Troy Miller. “CBP’s modernized Strategy brings the unique, formidable, and wide-ranging capabilities and authorities of CBP to bear on the illicit synthetic drug trade and build capacity and collaboration with our partners—domestic and international—to ensure the safety of the American people. As the nation’s frontline, CBP is uniquely positioned to lead the federal government’s efforts to combat fentanyl.”

The CBP Strategy to Combat Fentanyl and Other Synthetic Drugs drives a whole-of-CBP approach that feeds into the work taking place all across DHS as we lead interagency efforts against illicit synthetic narcotics.

This 2023 strategy aligns resources, enhances partnerships, and builds on the successful enforcement intelligence and data-driven operations CBP has executed this year, while leveraging CBP’s vast expertise and data holdings to disrupt the transnational criminal organizations responsible for the

illicit production, distribution, and trafficking of illicit fentanyl, its analogues, and other synthetic drugs in the United States. This strategy is aligned with President Biden’s National Drug Control Strategy, building on CBP’s unique customs and enforcement authorities at ports of entry and along our borders and complementing other DHS efforts including the Homeland Security Investigations (HSI) strategy to combat illicit opioids.

The updated Strategy aligns CBP’s work around four key goals:

- Promote collaboration and information-sharing to combat illicit synthetic drug networks.
- Produce actionable intelligence for targeting illicit synthetic drug networks.
- Conduct coordinated and unified intelligence and data-driven operations to target the production, trafficking, and distribution of illicit synthetic materials.
- Promote safe handling, protocols, and educational materials to protect

the CBP workforce, families, and communities.

This update focuses on an ever-changing threat landscape and the proliferation of synthetic narcotics. It not only focuses on fentanyl and its analogues, but also methamphetamine and otherwise legal precursors which are increasingly being used for illicit purposes such as the production of fentanyl and its analogues.

CBP's combination of interdiction and intelligence capabilities, complemented by its border search authorities, scientific services, non-intrusive inspection equipment, and canine detection teams, places it at the forefront of the U.S. government's efforts to combat the fentanyl crisis. CBP will continue to collaborate with domestic and international partners to thwart the flow of illicit fentanyl by enhancing information-sharing efforts, producing actionable intelligence, targeting the synthetic supply chain, and protecting CBP's personnel and canines from exposure to fentanyl.

As an immediate first step in implementing the updated Strategy, today CBP is also announcing Operation Apollo: a Southern California counter-fentanyl joint operation, with a focus on intelligence collection. The CBP-led operation will concentrate law enforcement efforts on disrupting drug and chemical supply, collecting and sharing intelligence, and leveraging valuable partnerships. Participating agencies, led by CBP, include state, local, and tribal law enforcement agencies and fusion

centers from the initial target areas of operation in San Diego, Imperial, Orange, Los Angeles, and Riverside counties, as well as federal agencies from within DHS including Homeland Security Investigations, and other federal agencies that have a nexus to narcotics trafficking as well as the intelligence community.

CBP-led Operation Apollo will build on previous actions to further strengthen enforcement intelligence on trafficking networks in Southern California, including the routes used and their operational logistics. As synthetic drugs continue to devastate individuals across the United States, the operation will also look to uncover and better understand the tactics, techniques, and procedures utilized by transnational criminal organizations to procure, produce, store, and transport fentanyl and fentanyl-related materials throughout the country. Partners will identify key indicators that lead to information that law enforcement can act on to disrupt drug supply in American communities.

Fentanyl production was limited to China when CBP's previous Strategy to Combat Opioids was developed in 2018. However, fentanyl production has since expanded to other source countries like Mexico and numerous transit countries around the globe, making it more challenging to stem the flow of illicit drugs into the United States. This problem is compounded by the fact that many precursors are used for legitimate purposes and may be legally imported and exported, making it difficult to disrupt the movement of these chemicals.

By targeting suspicious locations and recipients that demonstrate patterns of illicit activity, CBP can disrupt the supply chain of illicit fentanyl and its analogues, methamphetamine, and other synthetic drugs.

CBP will continue to build on previous work as the frontline against fentanyl, to adapt to new changes from transnational criminal organizations, and to leverage new information. Earlier in 2023, CBP and partners announced the results of Operation Blue Lotus and Operation Four Horsemen, focused on interdicting finished fentanyl product along the Southwest border of the United States. Just last month, CBP wrapped Operation Artemis, focused on stopping precursors and other means of production from entering the United States.

In four months of operation, CBP's Operation Artemis led to over 900 seizures, including:

- Over 13,000 pounds of fentanyl precursor chemicals,
- Over 2,590 pounds of non-fentanyl precursor chemicals
- 142 pill presses and 325 pill molds
- More than 270 pounds of fentanyl pills and powder, and more than 210 pounds of Xylazine
- More than 1,160 pounds of methamphetamine

And over 11,230 pounds of other finished synthetic drugs

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Borders against human trafficking

Every year, hundreds of thousands of people fall prey to human traffickers. This is what the official statistics say, but the crime of trafficking in human beings cannot be fully measured and expressed in definite numbers, as most of this illegal practice happens in the shadows and on the periphery of the observable reality. This crime is difficult to track but there are points of vital importance for identifying the victims and exposing the perpetrators – the borders are one of them. On the occasion of the EU Anti-Trafficking Day, Frontex wishes to remind all travellers: border guards are trained to help you.

The border effect

The main purpose of the EU Anti-Trafficking Day is to raise awareness of trafficking in human beings by building up a network of different actors involved in fighting this crime and supporting the victims. Human trafficking does not start at the border, but the border often plays a crucial role in stopping or, at least, reducing this felony and providing adequate information to the victims. Every border guard pays special attention to travellers not only to check their documents and confirm their identity but, most of all, to establish their vulnerability status. To an average traveller, all additional questions may seem like a hassle, but these border interviews have everything to do with the safety of the travellers.

Always pay attention to vulnerable people

Counteracting human trafficking is a responsibility of all law enforcement units, but their cooperation with humanitarian and educational organisations is key to helping the victims – the sooner they get the information about the risks and the available assistance, the greater the chance for saving them. In fact, all EU border guards are trained to look out for vulnerable travellers, such as children or refugees, to try and stop human trafficking at the borders before the victims disappear into a world of exploitation. For instance, the Agency has produced detailed guidelines, such as VEGA handbooks for children at land borders and children at sea borders to protect the youngest ones.

Since the outbreak of the war in Ukraine, the EU's external border with this country has become a special risk zone,

also in terms of human trafficking. Frontex deploys ca. 200 officers to different locations along this border as part of its joint operation Terra and the status agreement with Moldova, but one of the Slovak crossing points represents a particularly interesting reference. This is where two EU border guards, Ionut and Igors, support the Slovak colleagues and were also supported by the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR), deployed under the VEGA initiative.

“I work as the first line document expert,” says Ionut, “but am also trained to spot suspicious behaviour or any signs of distress or trauma that may suggest that the person at my checkpoint is at risk of being trafficked. In case of any doubt, I may ask additional questions and direct this person to the second line where they can talk more and receive more information before it's too late.”

“At the border, you can either let somebody go or stop them because of your suspicion,” adds Igors. “However, if all their documents are correct and there is no legal reason to stop them, the most important thing you can do is to raise their awareness and give them practical tips: who to turn to, what to do. Many victims do not realise that they are being manipulated into a horrible situation.”

This legal character of our borders is quintessential – Ionut and Igors have excellent skills and instincts to detect suspicious situations, but their action must be anchored in the legislation in force. They have the right to ask the travellers about their means of subsistence, the foreseen accommodation in the host country, the size of their luggage, etc., but there is little they can do if the victim is not aware of the risk or accepts it. The border guards often read the real story from the body language of the victims and may act upon it. It is called traveller's profiling, an important element of crime detection.

“We know special interviewing techniques, but human psychology is complicated. When people are vulnerable and in fear because their perpetrator is observing them from a distance or are simply afraid of officers in uniform, they might not open to tell everything. Still, we must make sure that they are informed about the potential danger they may be in and the available help,” explains Ionut.

It is a perfect opportunity to remind everyone about the international sign that all victims of human trafficking, kidnapping or any other crime can use to signal that they are under somebody's unwanted control – show your palm outward and place your thumb on the palm of your hand, then close your fingers down around your thumb. All law enforcement representatives will understand immediately that you are crying out for help.

All hands on deck

UNHCR, the UN Refugee Agency has been working on training curricula and other material for border guards for some years and are now sharing this expertise also with Frontex officers in Slovakia and other locations. Luca Curci is the head of the UNHCR Liaison Office to Frontex, the post that he took after working with refugees in various countries including in West Africa. He speaks firmly about what is needed to create a “protection-sensitive border management” system:

“We have learnt from our experience across the world that the response to human trafficking cannot be exclusively one of a security/police operation. In the border context in

particular, it requires additional skills and knowledge that build upon the guards' standard training.”

According to Luca, an effective way to combat human trafficking would involve a combination of several elements, such as the law enforcement tactics, community strength, intelligence, the contribution of human rights organisations that can introduce a protection angle, meaning the ability to identify categories of people at risk or people with specific vulnerabilities and protection needs to be referred to appropriate services, in line with applicable human rights standards and legislation. Both Ionut and Igors confirm that where the regular migratory flow through the border changes into a massive influx of asylum seekers, this extra UNHCR assistance and advice on how to act, how to apply correctly the co-existing rules for border management and refugees' rights, such as the principle of non-refoulement, are highly appreciated. In fact, where there is a risk of human trafficking, everyone's input is welcome – the border guards, the police, the human right monitors, the cultural mediators, and the NGOs.



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Modus operandi busted: Authorities issue warning after 154kg of cocaine seized from hull of cargo ship



Australian Border Force (ABF) used an underwater Remotely Operated Vehicle (ROV) at Melbourne's Appleton Dock to search a vessel, when it arrived from South America to the Port of Melbourne.

The AFP is warning criminals their attempts to hide illicit drugs in the hull of cargo ships continues to be disrupted by law enforcement after another import was seized by authorities in Melbourne.

About 150kg of cocaine concealed inside the hull of a cargo ship was seized after the vessel docked in Melbourne, the second attempted import of its kind in two months.

The ROV identified a suspicious attachment on the ship's hull below the waterline.

In the latest seizure, specialist divers from the Victoria Police Search and Rescue Squad retrieved four

packages of cocaine wrapped in plastic from inside the sea chest.

The packages contained about 154kg of cocaine from the ship. This amount of cocaine could have equated to about 77,000 street deals worth an estimated \$61 million.

AFP officers seized the illicit drugs, along with a suspected tracking device – and began an investigation to identify the source of the cocaine and its intended destination. This area of the ship is not accessible to general crew on the ship.

There have been a number of attempts to conceal border controlled drugs in the hull of cargo ships in recent months. It includes the seizure of about 200kg of cocaine from the sea chest of another vessel docked in the Port of Melbourne in early August, 2023.

AFP Assistant Commissioner Hilda Sirec said the AFP and its law enforcement partners were closely tracking the rising trend of transnational serious organised crime groups attempting to smuggle illicit drugs into Australia by hiding them underneath the waterline of cargo ships.

"My message to organised crime is that your modus operandi is busted. We know when illicit drugs are coming in and where they are stored," Assistant Commissioner Sirec said.

Joint operation seizes \$2 million worth of unlawfully imported therapeutic goods

The Therapeutic Goods Administration (TGA) and Australian Border Force (ABF) have worked together to keep more than 307,000 units of unlawfully imported medicines and medical devices, with an estimated value of over \$2 million, out of the Australian market.

The products ranged from large amounts of pain killers, anti-cancer medications, erectile dysfunction medications, prescription medications and other medicines with a potential for abuse, through to 36kg of border-controlled drugs, including performance

and image enhancing drugs, narcotics and benzodiazepines.

A significant number of counterfeit, falsified and substandard medicines were also seized and over 370 Australian-hosted online advertisements unlawfully promoting therapeutic goods were removed.

It was part of Operation Pangea XVI, - external site a global operation targeting illicit and counterfeit therapeutic goods.

Mass Forced Returns from Pakistan to Afghanistan Overwhelm Borders, Stretch Resources



The International Organization for Migration (IOM) and humanitarian partners are delivering a range of critical aid at border crossing points between Pakistan and Afghanistan in response to the hundreds of thousands of forcibly returned Afghans.

Nearly 375,000 Afghans have left Pakistan in the past two months primarily through the Torkham and Spin Boldak border crossings, according to IOM's latest figures.

The number of border crossings has dramatically increased from 200 daily to 17,000 since Pakistan's "Illegal Foreigners' Repatriation Plan" set a 1 November deadline for the "voluntary return" of all undocumented Afghans in Pakistan to their country of origin.

"Their situation is desperate; most people told us they were forced to leave the country and leave belongings and savings behind," said IOM Afghanistan Chief of Mission Maria Moita.

"People arriving in Afghanistan are extremely vulnerable and need immediate support at the border as well as for the long term in the areas of return. This is a significant humanitarian crisis and funds are urgently needed to continue providing immediate assistance after arrival to ensure a safe and dignified return."

Critical aid including shelter, water, sanitation, essential household items, healthcare, protection and nutrition

services, as well as cash to cover basic needs, transportation and food is being provided by the IOM-led border consortium.

"I was so panicked, those five nights I spent with my daughters on the way to Kandahar totally destroyed me," said Aliya, a 32-year-old mother of two. "We were taken care of at the border but there are so many people here at the same time, it's very difficult."

The unprecedented and increasing number of daily forced returns has required the establishment of larger reception centers where returning Afghans await assistance before proceeding to intended areas of return.

The border consortium has launched an initial Appeal to support the border operations. The dramatic surge in arrivals and the level of vulnerability of those returning will require a revision of the appeal and additional resources.

The situation for women and girls in Afghanistan is exceptionally difficult, and needs are only likely to increase as winter approaches. The international community must increase its support at a time when funding for the Afghan population is rapidly declining.

After decades of conflict, instability and economic crisis, Afghanistan will struggle to absorb the high number of returning families, many of whom have not lived in the country for decades if ever. With over six million people already internally displaced throughout the country, Afghans returning from Pakistan face a precarious, uncertain future.

IOM is grateful for the support of the consortium partners in Afghanistan who have mobilized as well as its donors who have enabled a prompt response to the massive increase in returns. Together, we reiterate our call to all countries to immediately suspend forcible returns of Afghan nationals for the immediate and longer term.

IMPACT OF GCC-PAKISTAN FREE TRADE AGREEMENT ON BORDER CONTROL AND DRUG SMUGGLING

by Noora Hassan, United Nations

The Secretary General of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) has recently expressed appreciation for the collective endeavors of various stakeholders within the GCC countries and the international community at large in addressing the serious issue of drug trafficking. This illicit activity poses a significant threat to regional security and stability, extending beyond national borders, affecting multiple nations and even continents, and causing detrimental consequences for the progress and development of our

societies. The GCC-Pakistan Free Trade Agreement (FTA) adds a new dimension to current practices. On September 28th, the preliminary agreement was formally ratified by the Secretary General of the Gulf Cooperation Council, Jasem Al Budaiwi, and Pakistan's Minister of Trade, Gohar Ejaz, at the General Secretariat's headquarters in Riyadh. During the signing ceremony the Secretary General characterised the agreement as a momentous economic pact, marking a significant milestone in cooperation. In a

separate statement, the GCC emphasised their commitment to advancing free trade negotiations with other nations, with the aim of fostering trade and economic collaboration for the member states of the Council, both regionally and globally.

Pakistan shares its borders with four countries: China to the northeast, Afghanistan to the west and northwest, Iran to the west, and India to the east. This strategic geographical location positions Pakistan as a natural transit and trade hub on the global stage. This geographical significance is also exploited by those involved in cross-border drug trafficking. While efforts are underway to secure the extensive western borders with Afghanistan and Iran through fencing, many remote and rugged areas remain unguarded. Additionally, Pakistan's 990-kilometer coastline, spanning from the borders of India in the east to the Middle East and Iran in the west, is still largely unprotected despite regular patrols. This vulnerability is exploited by international drug cartels, who misuse Pakistani territory as a transit route for their illicit drug trade. The drug routes between GCC countries and Pakistan are diverse and adaptable, as drug traffickers continually seek new ways to evade law enforcement authorities. The porous nature of the border regions between Pakistan, Iran, and Afghanistan provides a conducive environment for drug traffickers to operate. The illegal drug trade is a



lucrative enterprise, with significant profits at stake, which incentivises traffickers to continually adapt and exploit weaknesses in border security and law enforcement.

The introduction of a FTA between Pakistan and the GCC countries could potentially increase the flow of drugs into the GCC region. Under the FTA, there would likely be an increase in legal trade and commerce between the parties, which could inadvertently create opportunities for illicit drug smuggling. Increased legal trade activities might serve as a cover for drug traffickers, as they attempt to blend their activities with legitimate cross-border commerce. Furthermore, improved economic ties between Pakistan and the GCC may lead to increased movement of people and goods, potentially providing cover for drug smuggling operations. While the FTA may have numerous economic benefits, it is imperative for all parties involved to

implement robust security measures and cooperation to mitigate the risk of an increase in drug trafficking activities.

GCC countries, with their affluent populations, have a significant demand for drugs. The demand creates a lucrative market for drug traffickers. Smugglers are motivated by the high value of drugs in GCC markets, where prices can be significantly higher than in Pakistan. GCC countries are a relatively short distance away from Pakistan, making smuggling operations more feasible. Drug traffickers use a combination of land and sea routes to smuggle drugs from Pakistan to the GCC. These routes may pass through Iran, the Arabian Sea, or other neighboring countries. Organised criminal networks with connections in both Pakistan and GCC countries facilitate the movement of drugs. These networks are adept at navigating the logistics of cross-border



smuggling. Corruption among law enforcement agencies and border officials can facilitate drug smuggling operations. Traffickers often pay bribes to facilitate the movement of drugs across borders. Regions near Pakistan's borders, particularly in Baluchistan, can present security challenges as these areas have limited government control, making them attractive to drug traffickers as routes of least resistance. Some GCC countries collaborate with Pakistani authorities in counter-narcotics efforts. These cooperative efforts aim to intercept drug shipments and dismantle trafficking networks. GCC countries host large expatriate communities from Pakistan and these communities may inadvertently facilitate drug trafficking through personal networks

and contacts. GCC countries impose severe penalties for drug-related offenses, including lengthy prison sentences and even the death penalty. Despite these penalties, the allure of high profits drives some individuals to engage in drug trafficking. The geographical proximity, economic incentives, and demand-supply dynamics continue to influence this illicit trade.

There are currently a number of drug routes commonly used. One of the primary overland routes involves transporting drugs from Pakistan through Iran and then into GCC countries. Traffickers often use remote and less-patrolled border areas to cross into Iran. In some cases, traffickers may attempt to move drugs through the land

borders of GCC countries, such as Saudi Arabia, the UAE, and Oman. These attempts are riskier due to stricter border controls. The Arabian Sea provides a maritime route for drug trafficking from Pakistan to GCC nations. Smugglers use boats, dhows, and other vessels to transport narcotics and other drugs. These routes may involve direct shipments to GCC ports or transshipment through other countries in the region. Traffickers sometimes use commercial airlines to transport drugs in concealed compartments or through couriers. GCC countries have stringent airport security, but traffickers attempt to exploit vulnerabilities. Corruption among border officials and law enforcement personnel can enable drug trafficking with traffickers paying bribes to facilitate the passage of drugs across borders. Drug traffickers are adaptable and frequently change their routes and methods to evade authorities and may employ a combination of land, sea, and air routes. It is important to note that efforts to combat drug trafficking are ongoing in both Pakistan and the GCC countries with law enforcement agencies working to intercept drug shipments, dismantle trafficking networks, and prosecute individuals involved in the drug trade. Despite these efforts, the illicit drug trade remains a persistent challenge.

An FTA can have indirect connections to border security

measures. The FTA can play a role in helping combat cross-border drug trafficking by enhanced Intelligence Sharing and Law Enforcement Cooperation. An FTA can provide a platform for both Pakistan and GCC countries to strengthen intelligence sharing and law enforcement cooperation by sharing information on drug trafficking routes, key players involved, and emerging trends. The FTA can facilitate joint law enforcement operations aimed at intercepting drug shipments and apprehending individuals involved in drug trafficking. These operations can benefit from the improved relations and cooperation fostered by the FTA. Furthermore, economic cooperation can lead to investments in border infrastructure, including surveillance systems, checkpoints, and customs facilities. These improvements can enhance the ability to monitor and control the movement of goods and individuals across borders, making it more challenging for drug traffickers to operate. Economic growth and diversification supported by the FTA can help reduce economic vulnerabilities that might drive individuals towards drug trafficking as an illicit source of income. By creating legitimate employment opportunities, the FTA can mitigate the incentives for involvement in the drug trade. Economic benefits derived from increased trade can be invested in strengthening the capacity of border security institutions, including border



patrol units, customs, and law enforcement agencies. This includes providing training and resources for personnel involved in counter-narcotics efforts. Economic growth facilitated by the FTA can lead to increased government revenues. Some of these revenues can be directed towards investment in drug rehabilitation and support services for individuals affected by drug addiction. This approach addresses the demand side of the drug trade. The FTA can promote norms of lawfulness and responsible business practices. Businesses operating within the framework of the FTA may be less likely to engage in or tolerate illegal activities, including drug trafficking, which could harm their reputations. While an FTA primarily focuses on economic cooperation, its broader implications can indirectly aid in addressing cross-border drug trafficking by improving

cooperation, infrastructure, and security measures. However, it is essential for both parties to actively cooperate and implement specific strategies targeting drug trafficking within the framework of the FTA to maximise its impact on combating this illicit trade. Reduced drug trafficking can contribute to regional stability, which can have broader implications for Pakistan and its neighboring countries. It is important to note that these implications are based on the assumption that the FTA would lead to increased law enforcement cooperation and improved border security measures. The effectiveness of these measures in deterring and disrupting drug smuggling networks would depend on the actual implementation and enforcement of the FTA provisions, as well as the commitment of both Pakistan and GCC countries to combating drug trafficking.



The GCC-CICCD (Criminal Information Centre to Combat Drugs) collaborates with numerous regional and international blocs and organisations, including neighbouring countries, international law enforcement agencies, and organisations like the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), Interpol, Europol, Asianpol, Iran and Pakistan for Drug Control (JCP), the Joint Cell of Afghanistan, the Center for Integration and Law Enforcement for the Safety and Security of the Sea (REFLEXES), the Southeast European Law Enforcement Center (SELEC), the Arab Office for Drug Affairs, the Federal Criminal Police Office of Germany (BKA), the Turkish International Academy Against Drugs and Organised Crime (TADOC) the Regional Intelligence Liaison Office (RILO) - Middle

East, based in Riyadh, and the International and Ibero-American Foundation for Administration and Public Policies (FIIAPP). These relationships are crucial for sharing intelligence, coordinating efforts, and implementing strategies to curb the flow of illicit drugs, which often cross multiple borders and regions. By working in conjunction with these regional and international entities, the GCC aims to enhance its capabilities in preventing drug trafficking and its associated negative impacts on security and stability. It is of paramount significance that the GCC sustains its collaborative efforts with regional and international alliances and organisations. The establishment of new avenues for cooperation between the GCC and Pakistan in sharing expertise to combat the illegal trafficking of narcotic drugs

will signify a significant milestone in their joint efforts, which includes the exchange of intelligence and successful practices in countering the illicit trafficking of narcotic drugs, psychotropic substances, and their precursors. Moreover, it plays a pivotal role in bolstering international cooperation and coordination among entities and organisations engaged in this domain, further reinforcing the unified international network.

The link between a Free Trade Agreement (FTA) and border security is intricate and multifaceted. FTAs facilitate the movement of goods across borders by reducing trade barriers. This increase in cross-border trade necessitates measures to ensure the security of the supply chain, including screening cargo for illicit items. Border security agencies must cope with higher volumes of goods and people crossing borders, requiring enhanced vigilance. As trade volumes increase under an FTA, there may be unintended consequences, such as an increase in attempts at smuggling and illicit trade. Border security agencies must respond to these challenges by implementing stricter controls and surveillance to combat illegal activities. Enhanced trade facilitated by an FTA may lead to investments in border infrastructure. Improved infrastructure can aid border security efforts by enabling more efficient inspections and surveillance, making it harder for illegal goods to pass through undetected. Enhanced

trade and economic cooperation can influence migration patterns, potentially leading to challenges related to human trafficking and illegal immigration. Border security agencies may need to address these issues in addition to their core duties. FTAs often include provisions related to trade-related regulations and enforcement mechanisms. These may affect border security agencies' ability to enforce trade-related laws and regulations effectively. The need for efficient border security can drive investments in advanced technologies, such as scanning devices and biometric systems which enhance the ability to detect

illegal activities and contraband at border crossings.

Balancing the facilitation of legitimate trade under an FTA with the need for robust security measures is a continual challenge. Border security agencies must strike this balance to ensure that trade flows smoothly while maintaining national security. In summary, while FTAs primarily focus on promoting trade and economic cooperation, they can have significant implications for border security. The connection between FTAs and border security underscores the need for comprehensive planning and coordination among government

agencies to manage the trade-security nexus effectively. It also highlights the importance of adaptive border security strategies that can respond to changing trade patterns and security threats.

CBP officers seize 354 pounds of methamphetamine at El Paso port



U.S. Customs and Border Protection officers working at the Paso Del Norte international crossing seized 354 pounds of methamphetamine. The drugs were concealed in the bed of a pick-up truck that entered the U.S. from Mexico.

"This is an enormous seizure and demonstrates the need for CBP officers to remain vigilant at all times," said CBP El Paso Director of Field Operation Hector Mancha. "CBP officers utilized a variety of tools to

identify and stop this smuggler."

The seizure occurred when CBP officers conducting a pre-primary enforcement operation in the area just south of the inspection booths encountered a Dodge Ram truck being driven by 31-year-old Mexican woman. A CBP drug sniffing dog alerted to the bed of the pick-up. CBP officers escorted the vehicle to the secondary exam area.

CBP officers performed a Z-Portal x-ray scan on the vehicle and noted anomalies. A physical exam of the vehicle resulted in the discovery of 161 foil-wrapped bundles hidden beneath the truck bed liner. The contents of the bundles tested positive for methamphetamine.

CBP officers took custody of the driver. She was turned over to the Texas Department of Public Safety to face charges associated with the failed smuggling attempt.

REAL-TIME BORDER CROSSING WITH IRIS RECOGNITION

By Seyit Ali Kaya, Iris ID

Biometric technology has revolutionized border security, providing fast and accurate identity verification for travelers. One modality, in particular, stands out for its reliability and efficiency - iris recognition. With its ability to authenticate individuals using unique patterns in their irises, iris recognition has gained significant traction in border control systems worldwide. In this article, we will explore the benefits and applications of iris recognition in border security, focusing on its use in Europe and the growing adoption by governments.

The Evolution of Border Security Technology

Border security has always been a critical concern for governments, with the need to verify the identity of travelers while ensuring efficient and secure movement across borders. Traditionally, passports were the primary means of identification, but the advent of technology has paved the way for more sophisticated solutions. The Entry/Exit System (EES) has emerged as a comprehensive approach to border control, encompassing real-time identity verification using advanced biometrics.

Checking only passports or ID cards' genuineness is not mean authenticating the person who submitted that document/media. Any person who submits a passport just claims that s/he is the owner of the media and expects to be accepted as proof of his/her identity. However, it is just an assumption, and it is difficult to have a link between a person and a document. The only way to be sure is to use biometrics.

Real-Time Identity Verification with Iris Recognition

Real-time identity checks using iris recognition offer a range of benefits that enhance border security and streamline the travel experience. It should not only be evidence collection-based authentication by using fingerprints and face recognition, but both are also highly dependent on age and external factors like light, touching required, and external warmth. When we authenticate people with their iris biometrics, we eliminate all dependencies and have many advantages. Let's explore these advantages in more detail:

Enhanced Security

One of the primary advantages of real-time identity checks is the ability to verify the identity of travelers quickly and accurately. Iris recognition technology can detect attempts to use fake or stolen travel documents, preventing identity fraud. By leveraging the unique patterns in individuals' irises, border control authorities can enhance overall security and mitigate potential risks.



Efficient Border Management

Real-time identity checks using iris recognition significantly speed up the process of verifying travelers' identities, reducing waiting times and increasing throughput at border crossings. This improved efficiency not only saves time for both travelers and border agents but also makes border management more cost-effective. With fewer resources required for manual checks, personnel can be reallocated to areas that need more manpower.

Accurate Data Collection

By integrating real-time identity checks with iris recognition into the Entry/Exit System, the accuracy of collected data is greatly improved. This reduction in errors and inconsistencies ensures the quality of the data for border management, law enforcement, statistical

analysis, and government services. Moreover, accurate data collection plays a crucial role in reducing fraud, as every individual is properly accounted for.

Improved User Experience

Real-time identity checks using iris recognition provide a more convenient and user-friendly experience for travelers. The need for manual checks and physical contact with border officials is significantly reduced, making the process of crossing the border smoother and less stressful. Travelers can avoid long queues and move quickly from curb to gate, improving overall satisfaction and reducing wait times.

Enhanced Law Enforcement

Real-time identity checks with iris recognition also contribute to law enforcement efforts by facilitating



the detection and prevention of criminal activities such as human trafficking, smuggling, and terrorism. Integration of the Entry/Exit System with other information systems enables efficient and secure information exchange, aiding law enforcement authorities in identifying and tracking potential threats.

Iris Recognition in Europe: A Growing Trend

Europe has been at the forefront of adopting iris recognition technology for border control and identity verification. Notably, Schiphol Airport in the Netherlands has been utilizing iris recognition for employee access control for over 15 years. The airport, which processes over one million employee access transactions per month, has experienced streamlined operations and improved ROI by reducing errors associated with processing paper documents and automating security functions.

In addition to employee access control, Schiphol Airport offers a premium service called Privium, which leverages iris recognition for seamless travel. Privium members can bypass the traditional passport and ticket presentation process by simply inserting a secure smart card into a gate and looking into an iris scanner. This innovative approach saves passengers valuable time and ensures accurate identification, contributing to a smoother travel experience.

The success of iris recognition technology at Schiphol Airport is just the beginning. According to SITA, nearly three-quarters of airports worldwide now invest in biometric solutions, and airline investment in biometric boarding is projected to rise by 60% by 2024. The trend toward adopting iris recognition and other biometric technologies for border control is expected to continue its upward trajectory.

Convincing Governments to Embrace Iris Recognition

As iris recognition technology continues to prove its efficacy and reliability, governments around the world are becoming increasingly convinced of its potential for identity verification and border control. Iris ID, a pioneer, and leader in commercializing iris recognition technology has played a crucial role in demonstrating the benefits of this technology.

Iris ID's advanced identity authentication solutions offer unparalleled accuracy and reliability. Unlike other biometric modalities, iris patterns are unique and not susceptible to theft, loss, or compromise. Furthermore, iris patterns are formed within 10 months and remain stable throughout an individual's life, making enrollment and authentication fast and stable.

One of the key advantages of iris recognition is its touchless and non-invasive nature. The imaging process does not require bright lights, and physical contact with border officials is unnecessary for authentication. This aspect of iris recognition ensures a hygienic and convenient experience for travelers.

Iris ID's solutions are expandable, scalable, and flexible, making them suitable for various applications. With templates requiring only 512 bytes of storage per iris, large databases can perform efficiently in terms of speed and accuracy. The technology can operate in standalone mode or integrate

seamlessly into existing security systems, providing governments with the flexibility to adapt and upgrade their border control infrastructure.

Iris Recognition Beyond Airports: Border Crossings and National ID Programs

While iris recognition has gained significant traction in airport settings, its applications extend beyond the aviation industry. Qatar, for example, has deployed iris recognition technology at over 500 border crossing points. Last year, iris recognition was used to process over one million FIFA fans at Hammad International Airport and the Salwa border between Saudi Arabia and Qatar, capturing 150,000 people per day. This rapid identification process ensured quick and authorized travel for fans, highlighting the scalability and ease of integration of iris recognition technology.

The success of iris recognition in border control has also paved the way for its integration into national ID programs. With its high accuracy and reliability, iris recognition technology offers governments a secure and efficient means of verifying individuals' identities. By adopting iris recognition for national ID programs, governments can further enhance security, streamline administrative processes, and improve service delivery to citizens.

Iris recognition technology has emerged as a game-changer in border security, offering fast and accurate identity

verification for travelers. With its numerous benefits, including enhanced security, efficient border management, accurate data collection, improved user experience, and enhanced law enforcement capabilities, iris recognition is gaining momentum in border control systems worldwide.

In Europe, the adoption of iris recognition technology, exemplified by Schiphol Airport's success, serves as a testament to its efficacy and potential. As governments continue to witness the advantages of iris recognition, its integration into border control systems and national ID programs is expected to increase.

Iris ID, with its advanced identity authentication solutions, leads the way in promoting the use of iris recognition technology. With unparalleled accuracy and reliability, touchless and non-invasive operation, expandability, and scalability, Iris ID's solutions are transforming the way governments approach border security and identity verification.

As iris recognition technology continues to evolve and demonstrate its value, it is poised to revolutionize border control processes, ensuring a safer, more efficient, and user-friendly travel experience for individuals worldwide. Governments, airlines, and other stakeholders are increasingly recognizing the potential of iris recognition technology, and its widespread adoption is only a matter of time.

CATTLE RUSTLING AND THE CHALLENGE OF BORDER INSECURITY

*By Martin Igwe, West African Regional
1st Vice President, West African Action
Network on Small Arms (WAANSA
Nigeria)*

Cattle Rustling or Cattle raiding is the act of stealing many cattle at once. In Australia such stealing is often referred to as doffing while perpetrator are referred to as duffers in North America especially in the wild west cowboy culture, cattle theft is dubbed rustling while an individual engaged in it is dubbed rustler.

Some study has confirmed that some of the causes of the menace of cattle rustling is as a result of ungoverned space which serves as hideout for criminals.

Weak security system, porosity of our landborders and increase in illegal small arms and light weapons proliferation. Cattle rustling affect engagement and actualization of developments incentives that provide avenues for individuals to advance their lives.

Conflict in the Karamoja region of Uganda which bordered Sudan, Kenya and Ethiopia was caused by cattle rustling, group of pastoralist who see it as a traditional practice to acquire wealth.

Cattle raiding by Islamic extremist is soaring at unprecedented level with jihads linked to Al-Quida and the Islamic state groups stealing millions of dollars worth of cattle to buy weapons and vehicles to fund their insurgency across the war-torn west Africa country and region in the Sahara Desert known as the Sahel.

The progressive occurrence of cattle rustling involving armed bandits in Nigeria has been triggered by herders in farming communities at Zamfara State in North West Nigeria remains a major hot part for cattle rustling activities, Northern Nigeria experience with cattle rustling is now extending throughout Lake Chad basin having drastic impact in Borno State livestock markets. Madagascar serves as another example of these evolving and continental dynamics. Banditry linked to the raid of Zebu Cattle. This made the Island suffer political instability magnified by introduction of modern weaponing and criminal groups which became more professional across Africa. A first step toward curbing cattle rustling would be greater acknowledgement of the key role played by pastoralism as a source of livelihoods and National and regional economic growth. Increased protection and political will to implement policies capable of protecting genuine herders against treats of transnational organized



crime and it regimes coordinated regional response.

A solution that could contain cattle rustling activities among border communities must involved latest technologies as most of the affected regions are characterized by hostile terrains with inadequate physical and communication infrastructures. No adequate mechanism in place to aid in identification and recovery of stolen animals which is necessary in addressing these challenges in the affected areas.

Finally Cross border community action to compliment regional and national efforts can go a long way in eliminating this social vice that has remain historic in issues of global insecurity in recent times.

EIBM'S GRAND VISION & MOTIVATION FOR CONNECTOR PROJECT

In a world where borders play a pivotal role in maintaining security and facilitating the smooth movement of goods, an innovative project known as CONNECTOR – CustOms exteNded iNteroperable Common informaTiOn shaRing environment has emerged on the horizon.

This groundbreaking R&D initiative funded by the European Union, under the HORIZON EUROPE programme is set to redefine maritime systems and foster collaboration among European Integrated Border Management (EIBM) authorities, promising a brighter and more secure future for the Schengen area and beyond.

The concept of European Integrated Border Management (EIBM) is a grand vision aimed at striking a delicate balance between managing external borders effectively and keeping them as open as possible for legal travelers and goods. The challenge is clear: enhancing security without stifling the flow of people and goods.

At the heart of this vision lies the Common Information Sharing Environment (CISE). CISE is an essential framework that facilitates seamless communication and

information exchange among various maritime authorities, including but not limited to EIBM. Customs, European Border and Coast Guards Authorities, including FRONTEX, are central to achieving this vision. However, there are significant hurdles.

Interoperability issues have plagued Customs and Border Security IT systems, making it challenging to share information and coordinate effectively. Furthermore, a lack of harmonized risk assessment and management systems among not only customs administrations but also IBM authorities overall, has exacerbated the situation.

A Visionary Approach

CONNECTOR has risen to meet these challenges and usher in a new era of cooperation. This groundbreaking project aims to contribute to the European Integrated Border Management (EIBM) and the EU Customs Action

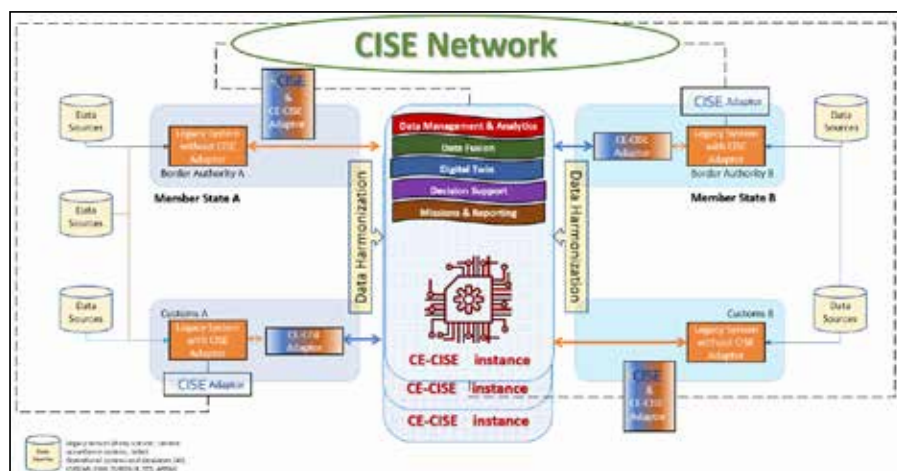
Plan. CONNECTOR envisions a world where Customs, Border, and Coast Guard Authorities work hand in hand through the Common Information Sharing Environment (CISE) network, which assures the information exchange among the maritime authorities, and the Enhanced Common Information Sharing Environment (e-CISE), which assures the information exchange among Land and Maritime Border Authorities, via the proposed Customs Extended Common Information Sharing Environment (CE-CISE). The realization of this envisaged approach will be done through the fulfillment of the main objectives of the project below.

CONNECTOR will develop the CE-CISE model and associated entities to ensure seamless communication among EIBM authorities and interoperability with the latest Customs IT systems, in line with EU Customs (EUCDM) and World Customs Organization (WCO) Data Models.

The project will identify common risk indicators for Customs and Border & Coast Guard Authorities and create sophisticated risk assessment tools to strengthen the shared IBM risk assessment mechanism.

CONNECTOR will revolutionize situational awareness for Customs and Border & Coast Guard Authorities with Decision Support Systems utilizing Risk Assessment tools, Natural Language Processing features (NLP), Data Fusion, Digital Twin features and the necessary Data Lakes for storing and processing the huge amount of data. This will enable better prevention and responses to cross-border crimes.

The project will offer dedicated Command and Control System



Instances dedicated to each end-user group, ensuring compatibility with the Customs Extended CISE Model and seamless interoperability.

The Real Test

To ensure the effectiveness of the CONNECTOR platform, the project will conduct a series of rigorous trials. These trials are categorized into three distinct phases, each tailored to specific testing environments and principles.

In the National test case, the testing environment primarily focuses on the maritime sector, specifically the high seas within the EU and Schengen regions. The testing principles revolve around short-scale scenarios, with preliminary testing conducted in the maritime environment, in Spain.

The Cross-border phase delves into a land environment, specifically in non-EU and non-Schengen regions, while also involving EU non-Schengen country. Similar to the National phase, the testing principles encompass short-scale scenarios, with a primary focus on testing in a land environment between Romania and Republic of Moldova borderline. This phase will be considered as feasibility studies to facilitate information exchange between

EU and non-EU authorities through the CE-CISE interoperability layer.

In the Transnational phase, the testing environment becomes multifaceted, spanning both maritime and land areas. The scenario is on a larger scale and involves testing in both land and maritime settings. Information exchange will be a complex task involving seven IBM authorities, encompassing both EU and non-EU entities, and conducted through the CE-CISE interoperability layer. The critical goals of this phase are to establish a common situational picture, shared risk assessment, and a comprehensive Decision Support System for all participating IBM authorities.

Stay CONNECTED with CONNECTOR

CONNECTOR invites stakeholders in the European Integrated Border Management (EIBM) domain to join the CONNECTOR Stakeholders Group (SG). Participation is open to relevant authorities at no cost; for further information, please contact us via the contact form on our website. As a member, you can influence solutions, access updates, network with peers, engage in pilot activities and contribute to policy influence.

2024 WORLD BORDER SECURITY CONGRESS: ISTANBUL, TURKEY

24TH-26TH APRIL 2024

*Where East Meets West – Developing
Border Strategies Through
Co-operation and Technology*



24th - 26th April 2024

ISTANBUL, TURKEY

Join us in Turkey, on 24th-26th April 2024, for the next gathering of the border security, protection and management community.

Turkey is arguably the most strategically positioned countries in the world and Istanbul, the most strategically positioned city. Turkey stands on the crossroads between two continents and indeed two cultures. It also sits astride the Bosphorus Strait, connecting two of the world's most important seas, the Mediterranean and the Black Sea.

Turkey has rail and/or road links from Armenia, Iran, and Azerbaijan

(the exclave of Nakhchivan) in the east, Georgia in the northeast, Bulgaria and Greece in the northwest, and Iraq and Syria in the southeast. And from there to the rest of the Middle East and Central Asia.

Conflict in the neighbouring countries has led to major influxes of refugees heading for Europe or simply the nearest safe haven. Turkey has an estimated four million refugees currently hosted, mainly coming from Iraq and Syria.

Terrorism is a major problem from both domestic terrorist groups

including the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK), the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL), and the Gülen movement. As well as spill over from neighbouring conflicts.

Turkey's strategic position as a routeway between continents also means that it is also a major route for human trafficking, drugs, weapons and other goods bound for the lucrative European market.

The heroin trade from Afghanistan to Europe is especially a problem with Turkish organised groups controlling the wholesale traffic of heroin to Europe.

Turkey is working hard with neighbours including the EU to address these challenges including the sharing of intelligence, conducting joint operations, and offering humanitarian assistance.

With its unique position as one of the world's gateway cities, Istanbul and Turkey is the perfect place to reconvene for the next meeting of the World Border Security Congress.

2024 Topics of Discussion

- Managing Migration (organised crime as cover for migrant



- smuggling and THB)
- Terrorism and Countering Terrorism (incl. FTFs as sleepers)
- Challenges for small ports and airfields
- Maritime Border Challenges
- IT/Tech at the Border as an Enabler/Threat - Cybercrime / AI
- Countering Serious Organised Crime, Drugs, SALW, Smuggling
- ID / Document Fraud
- Future Borders

The World Border Security Congress aims to promote collaboration, inter-agency cooperation and information/intelligence sharing amongst

border agencies and agencies at the border to better engage and tackle the increasing threats and cross border security challenges that pertain in today's global environment.

Border agencies and agencies at the border can benefit from the 'Closed Agency Only Workshops' with a series of behind closed door discussion and working group opportunities.

The World Border Security Congress is a high level three day event that will once again discuss and debate current and future policies, implementation issues and challenges as well as new

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2024 OUTLINE CONGRESS TOPICS:**Managing Migration (organised crime as cover for migrant smuggling and THB)**

It is well established that organised crime groups are able to adapt and evolve to use any weakness or vulnerability at our borders as a cover for nefarious activities. The migration crises we are experiencing on the southern borders of the US and EU offer prime opportunities for criminal activities, including smuggling migrants for money, which is generally a voluntary transaction but leaves migrants dangerously exposed to death, injury and abuse, and THB, which is the forced trafficking of persons. Regions of Asia are also experiencing unprecedented levels of THB, often for the vice trade. What are the latest challenges with migrant smuggling and THB, how do these two crimes differ in terms of methodology and how does can the international community combat cross-border crimes or irregular migration?

Terrorism and Countering Terrorism (incl. FTFs as sleepers)

Whilst the threat from ISIL and Al Qaeda has diminished since the destruction of the Islamic Caliphate in Syria and Iraq, Isil's defeat has left thousands of Foreign Terrorist Fighters (FTF's) in captivity in the Middle East and -Stan countries, with many more yet unaccounted for.

How much of a long-term threat do these unaccounted for and incarcerated FTF's pose as they are released or escape and use the THB networks to infiltrate back into their countries of origin. And how many have already made their way back to their home country without being picked up by the local criminal justice system. The UN mandated adoption of API and PNR, in combination with the more widespread use of watchlists, will be a key factor in countering the movement of FTF's.

Maritime Border Challenges

Securing maritime borders is one of the most challenging problems facing border and associated agencies. Tens of thousands of kilometres of coastline. Thousands of secluded bays and river estuaries and inlets. Islands, islets, cliffs, beaches, marshlands and mangrove swamps. Busy ports and harbours. Numerous commercial and pleasure craft coming and going in conditions that can be anything from flat calm to gale force. Add to this the unseen; submersibles, semi-submersibles, scuba divers and underwater caches. Given the favourable conditions for criminal enterprise, no wonder smuggling is one of the oldest criminal activities. How do you secure your coasts and tackle the multitude of ingress and egress points and ensure that our coasts and maritime borders are as secure as they can be?

Countering Serious Organised Crime, Drugs, SALW, Smuggling

Criminal actors continue to be very creative in developing new techniques and channels to conduct illicit activities. There is an old saying, 'follow the money' – investigating financial transactions and use that information to indicate evidence of a crime, a suspect or criminal network. But it is not only the money that facilitates this, it's exporter, carrier, forward freighter, delivery address, destination and more. Like API/PNR for passengers, this information builds a picture of the whole transaction that will establish patterns and history vital to identifying the organised criminal gangs that smuggle drugs, weapons, people etc. What are the latest challenges in the battle against SOC and how can border and associated agencies better use the data available to them to defeat cross border organised crime.



Future Borders

It is now clear that entry/exit systems are future of our borders and that API/PNR data is fundamental to their successful implementation. But how is that implementation progressing, especially at our maritime and green borders where there is little or no experience in the use of these technologies and data systems, and where conditions make it much more challenging, like busy ferry ports or secluded border crossings points or harbours?

As passengers in general want technology to make travel simpler, governmental movements towards new forms of border control with the use of Digital Identity are with public-private cooperation. What is the changing landscape of API/PNR and how will that data and systems be managed as it rolls out across the world and are Trusted Traveller Programmes based on API/PNR data the future.

What's the latest thought leadership in enhancing border protection and management to counter the ever-changing challenges?

Challenges for small ports and airfields

As perpetrators of trafficking human beings (THB) and international crimes, such as smuggling of drugs or illicit goods, continue to show signs of avoiding commercial airlines, there is evidence that regional airlines and airports, as well as light aircraft into small private aerodromes and fields, are being used for these activities, where the handling of these flights by departure and arrival are not through the regular border controls.

Similar issues and challenges are being faced on coastal borders, with smugglers and traffickers of human beings using small boats to benefit from utilising beaches or hidden alcoves to conduct their illegal activities.

What can be done to tackle the use of light aircraft and private airfields, and small boats, which are difficult to detect, highly problematic to intercept and easy for criminal to be in and out again in a matter of minutes?

IT/Tech at the Border as an Enabler/Threat – Cybercrime / AI

The mandated use of API/PNR data will make travel much safer and ultimately easier. But, the more people and organisations that hold and share our personal data, the more vulnerable we all become to cyber-crime, both as individuals and as organisations. Systems using API/PNR data are and will be a target for cyber criminals. The more personal data we hold and the more we rely on data systems as enablers at the border, the more vulnerable we are malicious cyber-attacks, whether for financial gain such as ransomware attacks, identity fraud or simply to disruption of the regular flow of traffic at the border. Does this threat increase exponentially with the advent of AI or is AI the answer to protecting ourselves and our systems? Can AI be utilised to generated alerts, red flags on travellers?

ID / Document Fraud

Criminals and terrorists historically often make use of fake and genuine identity and travel documents to enable their illegal activities. The adoption of Entry/Exit systems and data will no doubt make this more difficult but we should anticipate that criminals and terrorists will use their undoubted ingenuity and considerable resources to circumvent this problem. So, what is the future of identity fraud and how do we put in place mechanisms to identify the vulnerabilities. And once identified the vulnerabilities in the systems how do we plug the gaps and ensure that those gaps and plugs are shared with colleagues worldwide? With different agencies having developed different programs, how can these work together to the benefit of the international border management community?

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2024 CLOSED AGENCY WORKSHOPS:

The World Border Security Congress aims to promote collaboration, inter-agency cooperation and information/intelligence sharing amongst border agencies and agencies at the border to better engage and tackle the increasing threats and cross border security challenges that pertain in today's global environment.

Border agencies and agencies at the border can benefit from the 'Closed Agency Only Workshops' with a series of behind closed door discussion and working group opportunities.

The 2024 Closed Agency Only Workshop topics include:**Inter-Agency Cooperation and Information Sharing**

It is well established that inter-agency and international information sharing is essential for effectively fighting cross border crimes such as terrorism, THB, weapons and drug smuggling, the trade in cultural heritage and protected species. With no formal global organisation for agencies at the border, this Closed Agency Workshop is a mechanism and resource for agencies to discuss sharing information and how the international community can collaborate to achieve common aims.

Latest/New Modus Operandi

This Closed Agency Workshop will enable practitioners the opportunity to share analysis on the latest trends in cross border crimes and share some of their latest experiences of changing Modus Operandi of criminal groups operating in their area, and what they have done to combat these changing criminal activities/actions.

Watchlisting

This Closed Agency Workshop aims to promote the responsible and ethical use of watchlists. Why they are an essential tool for law enforcement and border agencies. It will cover what is required for an individual to be included on a watch list, what data and biometrics is included on an individual's record within a watch list, what watchlist resources are available and how to share information on a watchlist internally and with international partners, consistent with international law and legal standards.

By further encouraging such collaboration, cooperation and sharing of information between agencies, the World Border Security Congress aims to promote safer, more secure borders.

FOR BORDER AGENCIES AND AGENCIES AT THE BORDER ONLY – If you are interested in participating in the Closed Agency Only Workshops, in order to obtain clearance to attend the Closed Workshops, please register via the Online Agency Registration to begin the approval process.

Register Online Today at www.world-border-congress.com

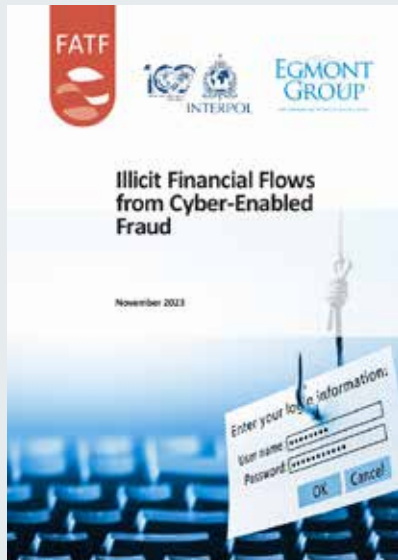
and developing technologies that contribute towards safe and secure border and migration management.

Registration is NOW OPEN at www.world-border-congress.com, for you to apply for your delegate pass to attend this leading and exclusive discussion.

We look forward to welcoming you to Istanbul, Turkey on 24th-26th April 2024 for the next gathering of border and migration management professionals.



FATF Publish Illicit Financial Flows from Cyber-enabled Fraud Report



Cyber-enabled fraud is a major transnational organised crime that has grown exponentially in recent years, both in volume of frauds reported and their global spread. Such crimes can have a devastating impact on individuals, organisations,

and economies worldwide, causing significant financial losses and eroding trust in digital systems. The transnational nature of this crime, with proceeds of cyber-enabled fraud often rapidly transferred to different jurisdictions, makes this a global concern.

As digital innovation continues to advance, so will the sophistication and scale of cyber-enabled fraud, if left unchecked. The Financial Action Task Force (FATF), in partnership with the Egmont Group

and INTERPOL, analysed how the cyber-enabled fraud landscape has evolved, its links to other crimes and how criminals may exploit vulnerabilities in new technologies. The report highlights examples of national operational responses and strategies that have proven successful in tackling cyber-enabled fraud. This includes the need to break down siloes and accelerate and enhance collaboration across various sectors and on both the domestic and international levels.

It is essential that countries work together and take action to stop the escalating threat of cyber-enabled fraud. The report identifies three priority areas in which jurisdictions should act to tackle this crime and related laundering more effectively: enhancing domestic co-ordination across the public and private sectors, supporting multi-lateral international collaboration, and strengthening detection and prevention by promoting awareness and vigilance and facilitating reporting of such crimes.

The report also identifies risk indicators and useful anti-fraud requirements and controls, that may help public and private sector entities detect and prevent cyber-enabled fraud and related money laundering.

Prison for drugs gang who attempted to smuggle cocaine worth £11 million in bananast

Four members of an organised crime group have been jailed after attempting to smuggle 139 kilos of cocaine into the UK hidden in a consignment of bananas.

Mugshots of Ball, Shahu, Kaviani and IbraNational Crime Agency investigators arrested the four as they unloaded a shipping container they believed contained the £11m pounds-worth of drugs in April 2022.

The container had arrived from Ecuador and was searched at London Gateway port.

Border Force officers found a number of cocaine

packages in the roof area. These were removed and the container was resealed.

A few days later, Robert Ball, who was later found to be acting on behalf of an Albanian organised crime group, contacted the shipping line to ask them to release four containers, including the one he thought contained the drugs.

Ball arranged for a transport company to collect and move the containers to a storage company in Herald Way, Coventry.

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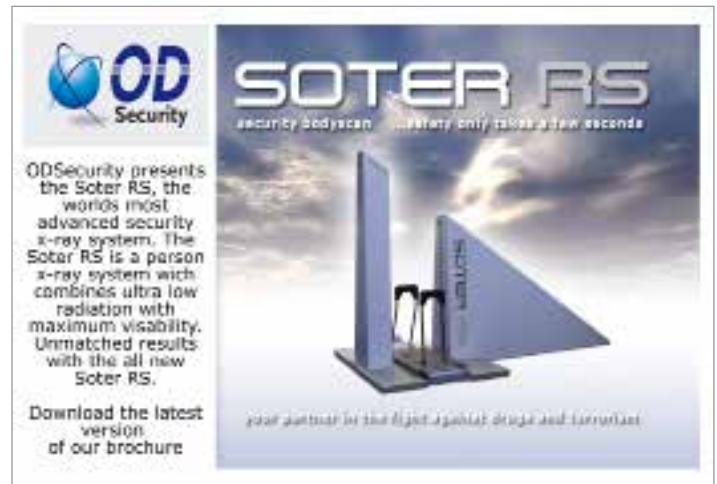


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BORDER SECURITY REPORT
For the world's border protection, management and security industry policy-makers and practitioners

FIRST CLASS SCREENING

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Advanced screening technology

ClanTect have announced the launch of their new Ultra Mobile Wireless Heartbeat Detection System

The “MDT Ultra Mobile” is the most lightweight and smallest tablet version of ClanTect’s next generation Human Presence Wireless Detection Systems (commonly known as heartbeat detectors).



The standard configuration of the Ultra Mobile System, including the ruggedised tablet and sensor only weighs 2kg. This system provides a quick, highly accurate, non-intrusive method of detecting hidden human presence in any type of road vehicle.

The Tablet includes a compact 8.1-inch TFT display, utilising a high speed Intel® Atom Processor x7-Z8750 1.6GHz, with burst up to 2.56GHz. The Tablet weighs 0.88Kg. It’s both super-fast and super-light and hence ideal for security and military personnel,

who are on the move.

The system can be set up for any vehicle search in approx. two minutes. So, it is genuinely ready for rapid deployment, for example by police officers alighting from a patrol car in a ‘Stop and Search’ operation, when pulling over a suspicious vehicle.

The Ultra Mobile also utilises a proprietary ground sensor, with unique signal processing capability. This is crucial for detecting and effectively removing ‘external’ ground vibrations (e.g., from passing traffic or road works).

Regula Extends its Most Comprehensive Document Template Database to 13,000 Items

Regula, a global developer of forensic devices and identity verification solutions, has reached another milestone in enlarging its identity document templates database. The world’s largest commercially available database, it now contains over 13,000 templates of IDs from 247 countries and territories.



When adding new identity documents to the database, Regula’s experts meticulously describe all security features, providing detailed descriptions of how every element should look and how exactly one can verify its genuineness. Recent documents, including those integrated into Regula’s 2023 database update, reveal a growing trend for more protection against counterfeits, which leads to including more security features or sophisticating the existing ones.

This trend has been particularly evident in the global increase in electronic documents, which have proved to be more fraud-resilient. In 2023, this trend continued evolving, as new countries introduced their first electronic passports. Among them are Bahrain, Iraq, Jamaica, Mongolia, Pakistan, and Somaliland. All of these documents are already in Regula’s database with the most detailed description of their features and references to compare with during the verification process.

TEKEVER and CRFS launch UAS with an ultra-sensitive RF receiver as a payload

TEKEVER a manufacturer of unmanned systems technology and CRFS a pioneer in building ultra-sensitive RF receivers for spectrum monitoring and geolocation, have successfully completed phase one of their system integration partnership and launched the first sub-tactical unmanned aerial system (UAS) carrying highly sensitive RF sensors as a payload.



TEKEVER and CRFS have successfully completed phase one of their system integration partnership and launched the first sub-tactical unmanned aerial system (UAS) carrying highly sensitive RF sensors as a payload.

The TEKEVER AR5 Uhas an endurance range of 20 hours, a payload capacity of 50 kg, and a cruise speed of 100 km/h. The RFeye Node is a lightweight and rugged RF receiver with a 100MHz IBW and a frequency range of up to 40GHz. Integrating an RFeye Node into an AR5 allows teams to geolocate

ground-based targets situated beyond the horizon – vastly increasing intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance (ISR) capabilities.

Capable of taking off from short, unpaved airstrips, the wide-area surveillance AR5 is easily deployed. When integrated with ruggedized RF sensors that have an IP67 form factor and are optimized for size, weight and power (SWaP), the UAS offers unparalleled spectrum monitoring, detection, signal capture, and geolocation (TDoA – time difference of arrival) capabilities.

Smiths Detection to develop narcotics detection algorithm

Smiths Detection has announced that it has been selected for EU funding as part of a consortium to develop an intelligent customs border control screening system (BAG-INTEL) that will automatically detect narcotics in passenger baggage.



The BAG-INTEL consortium brings together technology providers and customs agencies to solve customs and border control challenges by targeting specific bags needing manual inspection. All bags will be automatically screened for narcotics between unloading from the aircraft and baggage reclaim area. The results of the screening will be combined with data to identify which luggage should be investigated further.

Smiths Detection's algorithm will be developed by leveraging a combination of material discrimination, similar to that used in explosives detection, as well as

shape-based, deep learning, which is used for weapons detection. Smiths Detection is an industry leader in the development and application of smart, automatic detection algorithms. Advances in AI-based algorithms have enabled real-time, automatic identification of a fast-growing list of prohibited items. By framing any suspect items, image analysts can make faster, more accurate decisions which increases detection levels while maintaining the necessary flow of passengers and goods. Initially, the algorithm will be designed for the hold baggage and air cargo screening system HI-SCAN 10080 XCT.

Travizory Border Security SA achieves SOC 2 compliance

Travizory, the company behind next-generation secure and queueless borders, today announced that it has successfully completed the rigorous Service Organization Control (SOC) 2 Type 1 Audit. The audit was conducted by an independent third-party audit firm.



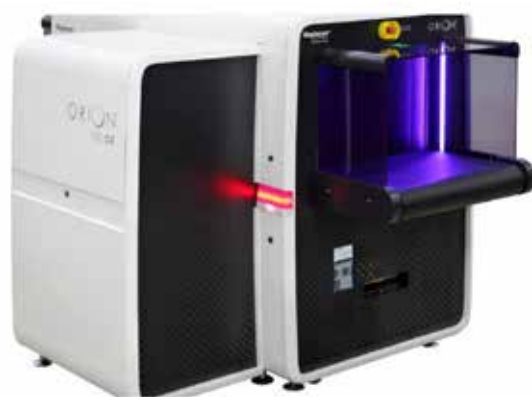
Travizory, which specializes in providing next generation border security systems to Governments worldwide, is committed to upholding the highest data protection standards. Receiving a clean SOC 2 Type I attestation report reaffirms Travizory's position as a trusted partner in border security.

SOC 2 certification provides assurances to Travizory's

prospective and current customers regarding the security of the company's information systems. Customers can be confident that Travizory's systems and processes have been thoroughly examined by independent auditors against the stringent criteria set forth by the American Institute of Certified Public Accountants (AICPA).

OSI Systems Receives \$15 Million Order for Airport Screening Systems

OSI Systems has announced that its Security division received an international order for approximately \$15 million to provide multiple units of its various checkpoint screening solutions.



Among the systems to be provided include the Orion® 920CT checkpoint screening system, Orion® 920DX dual view checkpoint screening system, and Itemiser® 5X explosive trace detection system. The Company will also provide ongoing maintenance, service, and support for these products.

OSI Systems' Chairman and CEO, Deepak Chopra, commented, "We are pleased with this award and look forward to providing our airport inspection systems with advanced technologies to enhance threat detection, baggage handling efficiency, and air passenger safety."

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Turkey is a transcontinental country, strategic positioned linking Europe, Asia and the Middle East, making it a perfect route for trade.

With a total border boundary of some 4,000 miles, about three-quarters is maritime, including coastlines along the Black Sea, the Aegean, and the Mediterranean, as well as the narrows that link the Black and Aegean seas.

The 'EU-Turkey deal', a 'statement of cooperation' between EU states and the Turkish Government, means Turkey can take any measures necessary to stop people travelling irregularly from Turkey to the Greek islands, and currently manages over 5 million migrants and refugees.

Turkey is a top destination for victims of human trafficking, as well a global trafficking hub for South American cocaine, fuelling rising demand for the drug in Eastern Europe and the Persian Gulf.

Many challenges face the region, which impacts globally, and therefore, an excellent place for the hosting of the next World Border Security Congress.

The World Border Security Congress is a high level 3 day event that will discuss and debate current and future policies, implementation issues and challenges as well as new and developing technologies that contribute towards safe and secure border and migration management.

We look forward to welcoming you to Istanbul, Turkey on 24th-26th April 2024 for the next gathering of border and migration management professionals.

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- Colleen Ryan, Border Advisor, Border Security & Management Unit, Transnational Threats Department (TNTD), OSCE
- Dr Maria Carmela Emanuele, Customs Officer -Chemist, Italian Customs and Monopolies Agency
- Emmanuel Oshoba, Deputy Comptroller of Customs, Nigeria Customs Service
- Guido Ferraro, Project Manager, Joint Research Centre, European Commission
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